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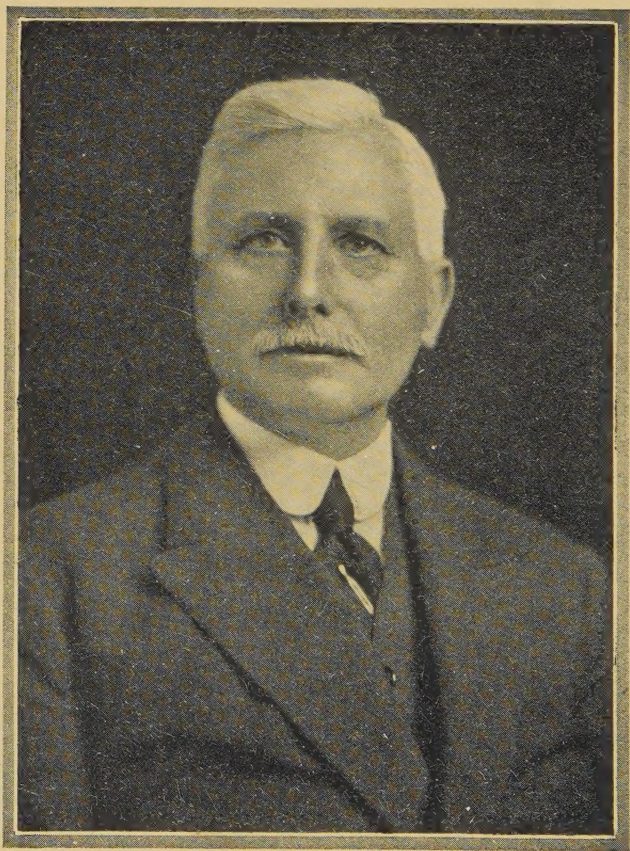
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**YARNS OF AN OLD SHELLBACK**









THE AUTHOR, PRESENT DAY



# YARNS OF AN OLD SHELLBACK

BY  
J. L. VIVIAN MILLETT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
C. FOX SMITH



WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS



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## INTRODUCTION

### I

**T**HIS is a plain chronicle of plain happenings—such happenings as made up the daily lives of all those who went down to the sea in ships between forty and fifty years ago. It is that kind of fact which is stranger than fiction, upon which, by the way, fiction is very frequently based, and gives a clear and vigorous picture—not unduly tinged with the roseate hues of sentimental retrospect—of the lot of the sail-trained apprentice in the days when, thanks to the growing scarcity of skilled seamen and difficulty of running sailing ships at a profit, he was virtually an A.B. who paid, or whose parents paid, for the privilege of doing rather more than an average man's work.

Times have changed, and men with them, in nearly every phase of nautical life since first the writer of these recollections was initiated into the brotherhood of the sea. Garden Reach as he remembers it was still a forest of mast and spar, and the bleak and perilous anchorage of Algoa Bay still rang with the unforgettable music of the chanteying crews.

But sail had seen its zenith. Already the process was at work by which the "steam-kettle"—grimy portent of the future—was to sweep all those proud fleets from the seas. Stunsails were all but vanished.

So were the big crews which handled them. And the weary trudging round from port to port in search of charters and cargoes had begun which was to break the hearts of so many captains before the long struggle came to its inevitable end.

It was Captain Millett's good fortune to be intimately associated with two vessels—"The Tweed" and the "Cutty Sark"—which were great ships in that day of great ships. His experience in "The Tweed" was not exactly a happy one. She was one of those ships whose departing crew must have put all their souls into their rendering of "Leave 'er, Johnny"! But it was none of her fault. It seldom is a ship's own fault, as any sailor will tell you.

It is not in material things alone that the change has been, nor indeed that has been the greater. It is in the very soul and spirit of the seaman that, during the short span of years since the coming of steam, there has been witnessed so amazing a transformation. Gone for ever is the old shellback, with his interminable ballads and his no less interminable and rambling yarns, with his queer beliefs and superstitions, his ingrained likes and dislikes. He believed that the souls of dead sailormen inhabited the bodies of seabirds. He disliked Finns as shipmates but a little less than women, however he might allow the latter to make a fool of him ashore; and if many captains' wives were like the lady of the "Boadicea," whose disposition so aptly coincided with the name of her husband's ship, there would

be no need to blame superstition for the prejudice. Illiterate, thriftless, turbulent, an easy prey ashore to the vilest of humanity, afloat he was no unworthy participant in the eternal contest between man and the sea.

Gone are the bucko mates, the hard-case skippers, gone the young "brass-bounder," whose lot was so rough by comparison with that of his prototype, the steamship "cadet" of to-day.

He had a hard time, the apprentice in sail. The wonder is that he seems to look back upon it, for all its hardships, as the nearest approach he has ever known to Paradise! He was badly housed and worse fed, and he was worked like a nigger. But in one important respect at least he was far better off than the modern cadet.

It were a mere idle beating of the air to argue at this time of day the point of the value of a training in sail to a ship's officer. To do so only lays one open to the charge of being a hidebound reactionary with a bee in one's bonnet. For good or ill, the thing is done; and this nation, which grew great through her sailing fleet, has been the first to scrap it entirely as a training-ground for seagoing boyhood.

But there is one point upon which these reminiscences touch which will, I think, sooner or later, have to be taken into account by those practically concerned with the business of training boys to the sea.

In the old days, as Captain Millett points out, an apprentice's ship was his gymnasium, and a pretty

gruelling one too. He didn't need horizontal bars, or anything of that sort, so long as he had yards and shrouds and backstays and what not, which provided him with all the exercise he wanted and a good deal more than he wanted. But things are changed in that as in most other respects.

The sailing-ship apprentice was very often cold, hungry, and wet. He had very little opportunity for study. But he had the priceless gift of fitness. He was hard as iron in nerve and constitution ; and it was, I make bold to say, men of such nerve and such constitution who were best able to endure the wearing strain of life in "small craft" during the long years of the Great War at sea.

Hardness and fitness are as necessary now as they ever were, and as they always will be. And how, in the name of goodness, is a growing boy to make himself and keep himself physically fit in a modern steamer ? Unless some system can be devised—such as exists in the Royal Navy—to take the place in this respect of that which has passed away, the likelihood is that the next generation of seafarers will be as much inferior physically to the average landsman as their predecessors were the reverse.

## II

Whatever hardships the brass-bounder had to put up with, liver attacks owing to too little exercise and too much food and drink were not among them ! It was one of the ironies of fate that such things



were confined on board ship to the " Old Man " in his splendid isolation. And that brings me to another of the interesting aspects of Captain Millett's experience.

It has been said, not without a modicum of truth, that no man is fit to be another man's master. And it is undeniably a dangerous thing for a man to be possessed of an absolute power over the minds and bodies of others, unless he be of such stuff that he can overcome the temptations it brings in its train. It is, on the whole, rather a remarkable testimony to the innate decency of average human nature that, out of the hundreds of shipmasters who exercised such power during the old days at sea, it was seriously misused not by so many but by so few.

The lot of the sailing shipmaster was one surrounded by many pitfalls. He was terribly solitary. He was thrown entirely upon his own resources from the moment that the departing pilot's leg was over the rail. He had to make his own decisions—decisions involving, very often, issues of life and death. No one, in the last resort, shared his responsibility. If he came to grief, his was the blame ; and he was a marked man in consequence for the rest of his days. He had the management of all kinds of ship's business, as well as of the navigation of his ship. He was an absolute monarch over his crew and officers ; and, like all absolute monarchs, he was not without his train of sycophants and flatterers.

It is, then, not wonderful that in some few cases—on the whole, as I have said, very few—the power and combined strain of his position resulted in a certain degree of “swelled-headedness,” which in extreme instances almost amounted to insanity. Herman Melville’s melodramatic Ahab no doubt had a counterpart in the author’s own experience ; but as a rule the effect of too much responsibility upon those not qualified to bear it was to make them into one of three things : a pompous martinet, a drunkard, or any of those violent and tyrannical men to whom the merchant seaman gave the generic title of “Bully.”

The vagaries of some of these men were so extraordinary that the wonder is they held their positions, as they in fact did, for years. Met with in the pages of a novel, such a character as “Bully Pringle” would be considered overdrawn. They were tragical beings, for all they are funny enough to read about—tragical both as regards themselves and the unfortunate men and boys who were subject to their whims and passions.

The latter part of Captain Millett’s recollections touch upon a phase of sea-life which has so far found but few chroniclers, namely, the transition stage from sail to steam.

As a matter of fact, the steamship of that period is more completely extinct than the sailing vessel she ousted. She was a “sort of a giddy harumfrodite”—a bit o’ both, in a manner of speaking—a sailing ship with an engine inside her. Her

engines were about as reliable as those of the motors which a few years ago used to jib at the slope of St. James's Street and send for a horse to haul them up. She generally crossed square yards, and her captain, who had been trained in sail and hated steamers rather worse than the devil, cracked on sail whenever he got the chance.

She was, on the whole, a much pleasanter creature to look at than her efficient daughter of to-day, with her clipper bows, generally adorned with a handsome figurehead, her pipeclayed sail-covers, rendered necessary, of course, by the smuts from her engines, her shining brass, and her snowy decks. But she was the devil and all to keep decent ! She had neither the glamour of the past nor the novelty of the present. She has vanished into her grave unhonoured and unsung ; unrecorded, except in some few instances, of which those described in the present volume are some. But if the naked horror of the " rotor ship " is going to oust steam as steam has ousted sail, the time may come when the beauties of such ships as the " Bracadaile " and the " Guildford " will be sung by ancient and toothless firemen who knew them in their prime, even as those of " Lightning " and " Thermopylae " by the sailormen of yester-year !

C. F. S.



# YARNS OF AN OLD SHELLBACK

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

**Y**OUNG fellows going to sea nowadays have no conception of what we old-timers had to go through, whose sea career began forty-four or more years since. "The old order changeth" in pretty nearly every branch of modern life, but nowhere has it done so more completely than in conditions of apprenticeship in the merchant service.

To-day, a young fellow going as an apprentice—or rather as a "cadet," for the old term, like the kindred one of "mate," is dropping out of use—in one of the crack lines of steamers not only considers himself, but is treated as, a junior officer. He shares a two-berth cabin, often has a steward to attend to him, eats his meals at the second table in the saloon, and has sheets to his bed. Sheets—ye gods! He is, moreover, paid for such services as he renders—these services being part of his training in navigation and the handling and stowing of cargoes.

Far be it from me to deny him the possession of the plucky spirit and the disregard of danger which have been part of the sailor's heritage since the



dawn of Britain's career as a maritime nation. But he cannot learn to be a seaman in the old sense, because there is no longer any seamanship to be learnt; nor can he keep himself physically fit, because there is no going aloft. Going aloft was the finest exercise in the world. It brought every muscle of the body into play. "'Old on with yer belly!" was the old sailorman's somewhat primitive way of describing what had literally to be done very often—when fisting down a sail with both hands fully occupied, leaning over the yard so that one's feet barely reached the foot-ropes.

Before I go on to describe my own experiences as an apprentice, it may be of interest if I set down a few facts about seamen and shipping generally forty years ago. The decline in sailing ships had already set in, and the old type of seaman was also beginning, though only beginning, to disappear. The "able-bodied seamen" of the old school were mostly quite uneducated, many of them being unable to write or even read. This fact was brought to my notice on my first voyage, when I was in great demand to read the men's letters to them and to write their answers. These usually opened with the time-honoured formula, "I hope you are well, as it leaves me at present."

But those who either received or wrote letters were the lucky exceptions. Sailors as a rule had no friends. They were looked upon as a disreputable class, and indeed the poor fellows had not much chance to be anything else. Immediately they stepped on shore with any money, they were surrounded by landsharks, male and female, who doped them with inferior liquor, with the result that they soon became either blind to the world or else fighting-mad. When they came to themselves they found themselves lying in some

deserted alley or in the cells ; but in either case without a penny left of their hard-earned wages.

I myself knew of a carpenter who was paid off with three years' wages, amounting to over £250. The Board of Trade officials begged him to leave a part of his money in their care, but, being a sober, steady man who imagined he could take care of himself, he refused. He was enticed into one of the vile dens of Sailor Town, and plied with drink, and the next morning he woke to find that he had not a penny left with which to bless himself.

Ashore sailors were the prey of the underworld. When they were at sea they were often not in much better case, for they were at the mercy of the bucko skipper and hard-hitting mates, who looked upon them as something less than human beings. I remember—this was after I had left the sea myself—an old “blue-nose” skipper who had been brought up in that school. He was well known as a bit of a terror to his men, although when his wife was around (she generally went to sea with him) he was as mild as a lamb. Off the Horn he lost a man overboard, and although, as a matter of fact, he had been anxious to make an attempt to save him and had been begged not to by the mate and the carpenter, one or two sea lawyers among the crew worked up a case of brutality against him, and a Board of Trade inquiry was held. The poor old skipper was in a sad taking about it ; and one day I went on board his ship and found him pacing the poop in great tribulation.

“What’s up, skipper ?” I asked.

“Why, all this double-blanked fuss about one blank good-for-nothing sailor !”

The food was scanty and very bad. The day’s rations consisted of one pound and a half either of beef or pork (both, of course, the salt variety),

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tinned fresh meat, if such were available, being served out twice a week. The meat was weighed uncooked, and after it had been boiled each man had generally less than a pound to spread over his three meals. There were no potatoes, butter, or marmalade, while as for such luxuries as seamen get nowadays—condensed milk, mustard, pickles, and so forth—these were simply unheard of. The coffee and tea were of the very poorest quality. The most you could say for them was that they were warm and wet, and they were drunk for that reason, and because there was nothing better to be had.

But in spite of—perhaps because of—this scanty fare, combined with the constant exercising of every muscle of the body by continual work aloft, a man, provided he was physically fit, soon became in splendid condition, and it was very seldom that anyone was laid up at sea unless by an accident. It was truly a case of “survival of the fittest,” and never again, perhaps, in the history of the world will there be such a fine race of men as those who spent their lives in sailing ships. They were little enough appreciated in their day and generation. But they carried their lives in their hands day and night, and never thought of the risks they ran as anything out of the common. If a dangerous job had to be done—well, it had to be done. There was no hanging back. It was not until everything was snugged down and the danger over—if indeed then—that anyone thought of the perilous nature of the work.

We apprentices had to take our share of hard work and danger with the rest, and we very quickly lost all sense of fear. I cannot say that we were ever taught our work in the strict sense of the word. We were encouraged to do it, and if encouragement wasn't enough we were forced.

I remember on my first voyage to sea, as soon as we got into fine weather the carpenter, who had taken rather a liking to me, asked me whether I had ever been aloft.

"No," I replied.

"Come along with me, then," said Chips, and he helped me on to the ratlines and persuaded me to climb in front of him until I arrived at the top. So far, so good, but I began to feel a bit scared when I realized that I was expected to climb over the futtock shrouds. However, Chips's language scared me even more, and by hook or by crook I scrambled over the top and into the topmast rigging. But he had not finished with me yet. I had to go on in front of him to the cross-trees, and when I got there I had to sit on one of them and hold on for dear life to the backstay while he did his job of work, which consisted of refastening one of the cleats. After a few months I found myself quite at home aloft, and was very soon able to bear a hand in taking in sail.

When we got into the Tropics we first-voyagers were taught to take the wheel, and in a short time we were allowed to stand our regular "trick." As regarded splicing, sailmaking, and the thousand-and-one other jobs a sailor in those days had to know, we had to learn them by experience and by helping other men who knew them. Never at any time in the course of my four years' apprenticeship was I really *taught* anything, and the same applied, I believe, to most apprentices. We had to find out ourselves how to do what was required of us, and God help us if it was not done properly!

We never learnt the slightest rudiments of navigation, and had to mug it up at a nautical school when the time came to pass for second mate. The captain and the other officers treated us exactly

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the same as the fo'c'sle hands. No difference was made in regard to the food, and the one idea was to get as much work out of us as possible. Apprentices in my day had to do men's work while they were still boys in age and strength, and pay a premium of anything from £20 to £100 for the privilege of doing so.

Talking about payment reminds me that in those days able-bodied seamen received only £2 10s. monthly. A chief officer's pay was from £6 a month, that of a second officer from £4 a month. A captain drew from £12 a month upwards. What a contrast to present-day rates! There was no overtime, and work in port commenced at 6 a.m. and finished at 6 p.m., with an interval of half an hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner. At sea "watch and watch" was the rule, and for the slightest fault, or if the skipper or mate happened to be in a bad temper, we were kept at it during our afternoon "watch below." This was the invariable practice when homeward bound in the south-east trades—all hands being kept at work in the afternoon for a fortnight painting the ship inside and out while she ran gently before the trade wind.

So much for the contrast between the conditions prevailing then and those which exist to-day. I have only touched upon a few points that readily occur to me, but the same wide difference will be found in practically every phase of life at sea. Some changes are for the better, some for the worse; but whether for better or worse, there they are, and there is no use in grouching over them.

And now for just a few words by way of explanation or excuse for these rough recollections before I embark upon my narrative. Please don't think that I lay claim to having performed any wonderful

exploits during my life at sea. Nothing is farther from my thoughts. Every fellow who went to sea in my generation went through very much the same mill as I did. But the time I write about, although not at all remote in point of actual years, is a vanished time, and my personal recollection of it may therefore be of interest to those who want to know what it was like, and perhaps to others who are reminded through my yarns of their own early days. Then, again, I had the honour of serving part of my time in two very famous ships—"The Tweed" and "Cutty Sark"; while both in sail and steam I had the good or ill luck, whichever way you like to look at it, to be mixed up with some of the "hardest cases" in the merchant service.

And now, having finished my preliminaries, I can get ahead with my tale.



## CHAPTER II

### I GO TO SEA

**I** WAS born with a salt drop in my blood. My father's family had lived at Penzance for generations, and several of them had followed the sea. He himself was one of the chief officers in the Customs at Gloucester, near which city I was born on May 2, 1865. But his heart was always at sea. He had been prevented by his parents from following his inclination, and shortly before he died—I was only six years old at the time—he told my mother that if I wanted to become a sailor she was to allow me to do so. Had his parents let him have his wish, he added, he would not have been dying while still a young man.

I inherited a taste for the sea from my mother's family also. She was one of the Vivians of Cornwall, and her father, Joseph Vivian, was in command of one of the East India Company's frigates. Her half-brother was Captain Alfred Maclean Wait of the Union Line. He was a great disciplinarian, and on that account was nicknamed "Black Jack." He was the idol of my boyish years, and I soon made up my mind that I wanted to go to sea in order to be like him.

My father's death left my mother by no means well off, and with four children on her hands. She found it, of course, pretty expensive bringing us all up, and could afford no better school for me than an old-fashioned "dame school" at Plymouth, where I stayed from the time I was eight until



I was twelve. It was a cruel place. The birch was used freely, although I never knew the taste of it myself; and I can remember seeing the boys' skins broken and bleeding after it had been applied. I myself used to have my ears boxed so badly that I attribute to it a slight deafness from which I still suffer. I dare say I deserved it in a way, for, looking back, I think I was a wicked little devil. I know I was always in mischief, and the fear of being punished didn't seem to act as a deterrent.

When I was twelve years of age I had a good shot at ending my voyages before they began, by means of a violent attack of "black measles." About this time my mother went to live in London, and, her circumstances having become more prosperous, she was able to send me to a better school. I went to the Abbey School at Penzance, kept by a Mr. Thorne, and there I remained for three years.

I am afraid I was still the bad boy of the school, for I was always in mischief and trouble. Mr. Thorne used to cane me unmercifully, and at the conclusion of the ceremony he always told me **that** I should live to be hanged. The poor old chap died after I was in command; he was very proud of his old pupil having become a captain so early, and when I used to remind him of his gloomy predictions in later years it made him blush.

At the end of three years my mother felt that she would like me to be at school in London so that I might be near her, and this gave me the chance of a first experience of sea life, for I elected to go up to London by a coasting steamer sailing from Penzance.

She was only a small boat, but I was at sea at last, and great was my joy until—although it was dead calm—I began to feel very sick. The cook

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rather cruelly advised me to drink a big glass of sea water, which he assured me would soon put me right. It certainly left me completely empty, and for the next few hours I longed for death to end my sufferings. However, the next day my sickness was quite gone and a most enormous appetite had taken its place, and I was able to enjoy the rest of the passage thoroughly.

My next school was the New Cross Naval College. I was only one of six day-boys, and the two hundred odd boarders looked down upon us with scorn, and would have little or nothing to do with us. I vigorously resented their attitude, and this, of course, led to endless trouble either with them or with the masters.

I was continually urging my mother to let me leave school and go to sea, and the climax came when one of the masters—for what reason I don't remember—set me an imposition of fifteen hundred lines of Virgil. When the school was dismissed at four o'clock, I, of course, being supposed to stay in and write my lines, I shut up my desk, marched up to the master, and holding out my hand, said :

" Good-bye, sir. I am leaving the school."

He stared at me in amazement.

" What do you mean ? " he spluttered.

" I am going to sea next week, sir," I replied.

I'm afraid this statement was not absolutely accurate, but it was near enough. At any rate, I was determined not to write the lines, and in this I succeeded, and left with flying colours, though I may add I had them hauled down pretty promptly when I got home and told my mother that I had said good-bye to the school.

It was, however, quite clear that to sea I must go, and it was not very long before the opportunity came along.

My mother happened to meet Mr. Richard Ellis, a shipowner, of Gracechurch Street, and hearing of my desire he suggested that I should make a voyage as an apprentice in one of his ships. Very soon I was appointed to the "Tintern Abbey," a Quebec-built full-rigger of 1400 tons.

At last my heart's desire was realized. My mother took me to Silver's, whose shop at that time was in a court leading off Cornhill, and I was measured for my uniform, and three or four days later I experienced the unforgettable joy of putting it on for the first time, my uniform cap with its straight peak being the finishing touch. Of course I fancied myself a sort of budding Nelson, as what boy under similar circumstances does not, especially when my mother and sisters hurried me off at once to the photographer's to have my portrait taken.

Then came the no less delightful business of getting my sea outfit. This consisted of a sea-chest full of flannel shirts, underclothing of all kinds, and dungaree suits; but what pleased me most of all were my new sea-boots, which I took the very first opportunity of wearing when I got aboard the ship. In those days, of course, apprentices had to find their own bedding, which consisted of a hair or flock mattress, together with a flock or feather pillow and four blankets. Sheets were a luxury only indulged in by the captain. The rest of the officers, like everybody else, only used blankets, and these I am afraid were scarcely ever washed.

I was a very proud boy when I at last joined the "Tintern Abbey," and, donning my first suit of dungarees, turned to with the other apprentices, who were at work getting stores aboard. It was not usual in other ships for apprentices to work in port, but as I knew nothing about such things I took it all as part of the day's work and thought

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nothing more about it. The same remark applies to our living accommodation, which in the "Tintern Abbey" was as bad as it could well be, being indeed of the most cramped and disgusting character.

It was situated at the break of the poop, and consisted of two bunks athwartships and four fore-and-aft, with just room for us to squeeze past to get to our bunks. Being a first voyage, I had to take the top athwartship bunk, which meant shifting my pillow according to the tack the ship happened to be on. Many a time I have gone to sleep and waked to find my feet higher than my head owing to the ship's having changed from one tack to the other while I was asleep.

All we had by way of light was a colza lamp, the smell from which was enough to turn anyone sick, while the light was so poor that only those with the strongest sight could read by it. The oil was very grudgingly given out, and sometimes, both in the "Tintern Abbey" and in "The Tweed," we had to contrive a substitute from the cook's slush, the oil doled out being exhausted.

I have never forgotten my first meal on board the "Tintern Abbey." As the junior apprentice, it fell to my lot to go along to the galley to get the dinner, and to my surprise and disgust I found it consisted of a great lump of meat chucked into a tin with some dirty potatoes boiled in their jackets. I carried the nasty-looking mess in the "kid," as we used to call it, along to the apprentices' house, and found that, nasty as it was, I got precious little of it. The boys all had their whack in order of seniority, and by the time the others had all had a cut at it there was not much left for me. However, I soon forgot about such details as poor and scanty food in the joy of feeling like a real sailor.

In case any of my shipmates who are still in the land of the living should chance to read these lines, and as my memory is as fresh to-day as it was forty-four years ago, I will give the names and my opinion of some of those who made up our ship's company. Captain Wale was a short, stout, smiling man, and, like the mate, whose name was Casimi, was extremely easy-going. The second mate was a Scotsman of about forty who was making his first voyage since getting his certificate. The boatswain was a Dane. He was one of the most powerfully built men I ever saw who was not a professional "strong man"; his chest must have measured forty-six inches, and he was one solid, huge mass of muscle. The senior apprentice was named Mavor, and being very handy with his fists he kept us in good order. The next in seniority was Staunton, a bit of a bully. Then came Culliford, Galloway, Bennett, the captain's son Alfred, and last of all myself. The only one that I ever saw after leaving the ship was Bennett, whom I met shortly before his death about fifteen years ago. At that time he was commanding one of Messrs. Forwood's steamers.

We towed down as far as Dungeness. I remember strutting around with my hands in my pockets, immensely pleased to see the sails set, when all of a sudden I heard a torrent of most awful swear words just behind me. It was the boatswain, who was threatening me with all manner of things, and inquiring if I thought I had only come to sea to watch the ships go by. If I had had any such idea he took steps to disabuse me of it, for, giving me a three-cornered scraper, he made me get into the pigsty, in company with the four pigs it contained, and scrape the floor. I did not like the job, but my fear of the boatswain was greater than



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my distaste, and I managed to do it to his satisfaction.

After the pilot left us the ship began to get lively, as we had to beat against a westerly wind. I soon became seasick, but the mate would not allow me to give up, and kept me constantly on the move, with the result that although I was sick many times, I soon began to get my sea-legs. And on the second evening I remember the captain's son and myself mixing up a tin of strawberry jam and a tin of condensed milk out of the supply of luxuries we had brought with us, and eating it in spoonfuls, without the slightest effect on our digestive organs. Such is boyhood!

The crowd forward were of all sorts of nationalities, and the most remarkable thing I remember about them is that so many were expert model-makers. In the twelve months I was on board the ship I think that almost every member of the crew must have made a model, and two or three of them were of wonderful workmanship, especially in view of the fact that nearly everything was done with an ordinary pocket-knife. Anyone trying to make a model block of about one-eighth of an inch with a pocket-knife will get some idea of the patience such a task requires. Some of these models were fitted with tin sails painted white, and I have always regretted that I did not get one of them when I had the chance. Unfortunately, when the men got on shore they invariably either gave them away or sold them for a drink.

A week after leaving the Channel, either owing to the owners' meanness or a desire on the captain's part to save paraffin, side-lights, although kept trimmed, were not lit. This was a common practice in those days, and one which, in my opinion, resulted in many ships going missing, for very often there

was not time to light the lamps and get them into their places before the oncoming ship (also often without lights) was too close to avoid collision.

Both the captain and the mate, as I have said, were very easy-going men, and I suppose the discipline in the "Tintern Abbey" was as slack as in any ship afloat. In fact, it was non-existent, and we never got "hazed" unless the boatswain happened to be in a bad temper. Being the youngest apprentice, and discipline being slack, I was looked upon more or less as the baby of the ship, and made something of a pet of by both officers and men. The mate promptly nicknamed me "Jacka," because I was Cornish, and as long as I stayed in the ship I was never known by any other name.

I soon learned the lesson that it was well not to take everything that I was told as gospel. It was not long before the mate took me in with the old-time practical joke of sending me to the carpenter to ask for the key of the keelson. I took the message without suspecting anything; but the language Chips used and the threats he uttered as to what he would do to me if I didn't get to blazes out o' that soon, made me realize that the mate had been having a joke at my expense.

Another lesson I learnt was from an old sailor I saw one day washing clothes. I watched him for a few minutes, and then said :

"I have some clothes I want washed."

"That's all right, sonny," he said ; "you bring 'em along an' put 'em down there"—pointing to a spot on the deck.

I did so, and turned in. But when I came on deck again I found my clothes still reposing where I had left them, and I required no further hint on the point !



This same old sailor took a great fancy to me, and used to give me plenty of advice, which he no doubt thought excellent. I remember when I was talking to him one day he said :

“ Here, my boy, do you ever tell lies ? ”

“ Well, yes, I’m afraid I do sometimes,” I replied.

The old fellow shook his head.

“ Don’t you never tell a lie, sonny,” he said ; adding after a brief pause, “ not unless there’s somethink to be got by it ! ”

And, cynical though it may sound, there is a good deal to be said for the old man’s advice.

Despite being somewhat indulged in certain ways, I was not spared any duty I was considered able to undertake. I was encouraged by both officers and men to go aloft in all weathers, but nothing was said to me if I felt a bit scared about tackling some dangerous job in dirty weather. I had not been at sea two weeks before I was set to work learning to “ box the compass,” and as soon as I showed that I could take the wheel by myself I was given a regular trick as long as the weather was fine.

When we got into the Tropics I had my first experience of what is called a “ rough house.” It was just as well that apprentices did not indulge in this kind of game very often, for it generally ended in somebody getting hurt. In this particular instance there were six of us sitting down after our evening meal, which consisted of the pork remaining from our dinner, mainly greasy and loathsome fat. Suddenly a “ rough house ” started. We all went for each other with pillows, and in the confined space there was no chance of dodging the blows. From pillows we soon got on to oilskins, old clothes, and anything else that came to hand, and some

bright combatant, spotting a great slab of the greasy fat pork lying in the kid, promptly hove that! I happened to be in the way and got the disgusting mess full in my face, with the result that I immediately flew to the ship's side and the fishes got my supper.

We were bound for Algoa Bay, and, being a slow ship, the "Tintern Abbey" took ninety-seven days to get there. I don't know that anything of much interest took place on the passage. When we got into the north-east trades, we bent foretopsail and lower stunsails, the use of which was fast dying out. In fact, I only saw on that voyage two other ships using them, and I never saw them again afterwards. In the days of the tea clippers these and other flying kites were greatly used; but in those days large crews were carried, nor did shipowners trouble much about the cost of broken bones and lost and torn stunsails. But when the decline in sailing ship freights set in, and crews were reduced in number, stunsails were discontinued, and they will now never be seen again.

Sighting a passing steamer was one of the chief excitements of the voyage, for in those days steamers were still few and far between, and all hands used to crowd to the rail to gaze at the unusual sight, just as now steamer crews look with wonder on a passing sailing ship. All steamers then carried yards, many being brig, barque, or full rigged, and their captains used to "crack on" sail just as if they were in sailing ships. Every ship's officer, of course, had a certificate in sail, for the modern "steam only" certificate was still undreamt of.

One Sunday morning we were becalmed off the Cape, and we apprentices were amusing ourselves by catching Cape pigeons with a line and a bent

pin when an old sailor came along and begged us to stop catching them.

"I've never seed them birds ketched of a Sunday without a gale coming up d'reckly arterwards," he said; "an' you b'ys may larf as much as you like, but, mark my words, them larfs longest as larfs last!"

But we only laughed the more, for it was a glorious calm day and the ship was bowling along with every stitch set.

However, we remembered his words when at eleven o'clock it came on to blow, and before midnight we were staggering under lower topsails against a hard gale. Of course the whole thing was a mere coincidence, but it can well be imagined that it was looked on by everybody on board as another proof of the truth of the superstition.

Algoa Bay, where we arrived ninety-seven days out, was at that time a very small place, with lots of Kafirs wandering around, quite uncivilized and wearing only blankets. Most of the trade was done by sailing ships, and the only steamers that visited the port were the mail-boats, which I should say were not more than two thousand tons register, although to us in sailing ships they seemed wonders of engineering.

There was a whole fleet of sailing ships in the roads, and in my mind's eye I can still see such long-vanished vessels as the "Carnarvon Castle," the "Adirondack," and the "Fleur-de-Lys," which I remember were anchored there at the same time as the "Tintern Abbey." We discharged the whole of our cargo (about two thousand tons) without any assistance from shore; and as we had no donkey engine or anything of that kind, all the winching had to be done by hand.

Algoa Bay will always be associated in my

memory with chanteys. Sailing ships were constantly coming to an anchor there, or else heaving up their mudhooks in readiness for departing. Every ship could muster a chantey crowd of a kind, and once in a way a really good one ; and one of my most pleasant recollections is hearing at six o'clock on a dead calm morning the full crew of a ship half a mile away singing " Good-bye, fare you well " as they raised the anchor. The deep voices of the men blended with the plaintive tune of the song is a memory I shall always cherish, and never again will it be heard under such circumstances.

From Algoa Bay we sailed for Madras, for orders. On arrival there we received a visit from a coolie, who came out to the ship in a catamaran—a very odd-looking figure in an admiral's full-dress uniform and cocked hat. He termed himself Admiral of the Port by right of ancestry, and of course demanded the usual " baksheesh." It appeared that at some bygone time an ancestor of his had been of great service to an admiral, and as a reward had received an old uniform, which must have brought in a considerable income to the recipient's family for generations, since captains of ships visiting the port made it their custom to give a few annas to the wearer of the uniform for the time being.

We received orders to proceed to Calcutta, where we loaded jute for New York. I remember very little about my stay there, except that it gave me the opportunity of seeing the old King of Oudh, who was responsible for many of the massacres of the Mutiny year. He was allowed to keep State ceremonial, and when driving he was attended by a troop of native lancers, who, with their fluttering pennons and smart uniforms, made a great impression on me.

From Calcutta we had an uneventful passage to

the American coast. The day we sighted land was a Sunday, and after dinner the bos'n and the second mate, whom we had seen a short time before going into the cabin, emerged wiping their lips and came along to the forecandle.

The second mate, standing at the starboard side, and the bos'n at the port side, ordered all hands out. One of the men wanted to know why, and promptly received a blow from the bos'n which nearly knocked him through the bulkhead. After that all the men filed out without another word, and they, and we apprentices with them, were kept busy getting the anchor over the side and fleeting the cables along the deck. This, as I afterwards learned, was only done to make the men dissatisfied and ready to desert as soon as the ship reached port.

On Tuesday, when we arrived in New York River, about twenty boats came alongside, and some very rough-looking customers climbed aboard and started to help the crew to moor the ship. I saw that bottles were making their appearance, and that some of the men were getting drunk; and by the time the mooring was finished they and the strangers were fast friends and disappeared into the forecandle together. It was then about six o'clock, and at seven o'clock, when it was dark, I saw the sailors, by this time hardly able to stand, being helped over the side with their dunnage by the men who had come aboard. Next morning there was not one of the forecandle crowd left in the ship.

This was the only case of crimping I ever saw, and probably it was one of the last. The captain treated the men as deserters, and therefore collared all the pay that was due to them. They no doubt thought they were going to have a rattling good time ashore, but they would be promptly drugged,



and would probably come to themselves in a strange ship, outward bound, the crimps having been paid "blood money" by the skipper for providing him with a crew. All this infamous traffic, thank God! was stopped shortly afterwards by the Board of Trade Regulations, but it shows how friendless sailors were in the days of which I write, and how little consideration anyone seemed to have for their lives, morals, or well-being. Their lives were accounted worthless, and there was no trade union to look after their material interests.

While the ship was at New York I developed an abscess in my shin, which had been hacked when I was playing football at school. The captain sent me to the sailors' hospital at Staten Island, and of all the badly conducted hospitals that ever were I should think that was the worst. It was a big place, with several wards; all the nurses were men, and I do not think any of them were properly trained. The hospital was run on the lines of a ship as regards time. The bells were struck every half hour, just as on board ship, and the working hours were much the same. The call to "show a leg" came at half-past five, and at six o'clock those of the patients who were able to do light work had to turn to, although it was January and bitterly cold, and swab the floors. All except the worst cases had to make their own beds. At ten o'clock the naval doctor made his rounds, and if he thought a man was malingering his language was more pointed than polite.

There were no separate wards except for infectious cases; all the rest—broken legs and all diseases other than infectious—were herded indiscriminately in the same ward.

I was in the hospital for a fortnight, and at the end of that time I was sent home as a passenger in

the four-masted square-rigged steamship " Assyrian Monarch." She was commanded by a Captain Harrison. He was an extremely good-looking young man, but the strictest of disciplinarians. In fact, he was a holy terror, having been trained in " blue-nose " ships ; he would not take a " back answer " from any man alive, and the result was that after every voyage he used to appear at the Tower Hill Police Court for striking some member of the crew. As it cost him five pounds for each offence it made it a somewhat expensive form of amusement !

When I got home, my uncle, Captain McLean Wait, of the Union Line, strongly advised me that if I was going to continue at sea I ought to go into a better class of ship than the old " Tintern Abbey." The result was that I applied to old Captain Willis, and, having been accepted by him as an apprentice, I was appointed to his favourite, and his largest, ship, " The Tweed."



### CHAPTER III

#### TO CALCUTTA IN "THE TWEED"

"**T**HE TWEED"—one of the peculiarities about her was that the definite article was an integral part of her name—was the last of the East India Company's frigates. She was built at Bombay in 1852 as the "Punjaub," a paddle-wheel frigate; she was of selected Moulmein teak all through, and it was said that twenty thousand pounds' worth of copper bolts were used in her construction. She had wedge-shaped bows and a square stern, with windows and imitation quarter-galleries highly decorated with gilt gingerbread work, and absolutely no sheer. After an eventful career as a steamship, which has been written about so much that I don't propose to go into detail about it here, she was sold in 1862 to Captain Willis, the old Indian Marine having been merged into the Royal Navy. It is said that Captain Willis recouped himself for his outlay by the sale of her engines.

I joined her in the East India Docks one day in May, 1882, together with nine other apprentices. She was commanded by the well-known "Gentleman" White, so called owing to the fact that he never appeared on deck in any weather unless clad in a double-breasted reefer suit, white shirt, and starched collar. In European ports he never went ashore without a top hat. He was a man of about sixty, with a very squeaky voice. He kept himself very much aloof from his officers; indeed, he never

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had speech with anyone on board unless he was obliged, with two exceptions, and those were the carpenter and steward, who in consequence were looked upon by every one else as tale-bearers.

The mate was called Norie. He was a well-built man, standing about five foot ten, and a magnificent seaman. But during the twenty-two months I had the misfortune to serve under him he adopted the rôle of bucko mate, and put the fear of God not only into us boys but also into three separate crews we shipped during the voyage. His language was never anything but fluently blasphemous, and everybody was afraid of him, so that I was immensely disgusted when I discovered, two years after I had left the ship, that he was nothing but a fraud. He could not use his fists at all, and had, moreover, a streak of yellow in him. The man who made the discovery was Southby, a fellow-apprentice of mine during the voyage I made in the ship. He completed his time in her, and afterwards became third mate under Norie.

During the time Southby and I were shipmates we had a quarrel, in the course of which he called me a name I cannot write. This got my monkey up so much that I went for him, and in the space of a minute had finished him off as regards his willingness to continue the fight. This same young fellow, when third mate, answered Norie back. Norie said, with many swear words, what he would do to him, whereupon Southby told him to do it. The result was that the mate had to show for the first time what sort of stuff he was really made of, and although Southby was no fighter he knocked Norie out. His bluffing days were over, and he left the ship with his tail between his legs when she arrived in Sydney.

The second mate was making his first voyage in





that capacity. He was a wonderful musician and could play pretty nearly every kind of instrument under the sun, but unfortunately he was no seaman. On arrival in Sydney, he got the sack through the ship of which he was in charge being caught aback in his watch and losing the foretopmast, and took on a job he was much better fitted for, namely, that of conductor of an orchestra. The third mate was the senior apprentice, a chap called Gorel, a big, hefty fellow, but rather a bully, and, so the rest of us thought, a bit of a sneak.

Galsworthy, one of my fellow-apprentices, had a very sensational experience in later life. After serving his time and passing as second mate he joined the employ of Jardine, Matheson & Co., of China, and eventually got command in their service. He was master of their steamship "Kow Shing" at the time when war broke out between China and Japan.

The "Kow Shing" was conveying Chinese soldiers, and although she was flying the British flag she was chased by a Japanese gunboat, and finally overhauled.

The commander of the gunboat sent a boat off with a junior officer to tell Galsworthy he must leave the ship with all his European crew, as he was about to torpedo her. The Chinese general in command of the troops ordered him, on the contrary, to remain in the ship, and drew his sword to enforce his words. When the officer who had come from the Japanese ship saw the state of affairs, he went down the gangway to his boat, and the third officer of the "Kow Shing," a young Englishman, purely out of politeness, followed him to see him safely off the ship. The Chinese general jumped to the conclusion that he was going to leave the vessel; he uttered a command, and the sentry at

the gangway with one sweep of his sword cut the third officer's head clean off.

Captain Galsworthy now saw the danger in which he and all his company stood. On the one hand, from the gunboat, which might torpedo the ship at any time, and on the other from the Chinese soldiery, who had already given such a ghastly example of their intentions. He could do nothing but await developments, and it was not long before these came.

The gunboat hoisted a red flag, indicating her intention to fire a torpedo, and next thing a big hole was blown out of the "Kow Shing's" side. Captain Galsworthy gave the word to the crew to jump for it, and himself set the example. He told me afterwards that he had a terrible time when in the water, for as soon as the Chinese troops realized that the ship was sinking and that there was no hope for them they started to fire at the men swimming for their lives. The captain and some, if not all, of his crew escaped, but all the Chinese were either drowned or shot down by the fire from the gunboat.

Galsworthy was taken prisoner when he reached the land, and was detained for some time in Japan as a political prisoner. When he was released he received compensation from the Japanese Government, but his nerves had been so badly shattered by what he had gone through that he left the sea and became, I believe, Emigration Officer under the Board of Trade at Southampton.

Another apprentice, by name Hickey, was a daredevil, but very lovable fellow. I met him once after I had left "The Tweed," when he told me some of his experiences. He took the rather foolish step of joining a Nova Scotia barque under a bully captain of the regular "blue-nose" stamp. Shortly after the ship left Cardiff the skipper said



something to him he didn't like, and Hickey gave him a back answer. The captain jumped right off the poop and went for him, and before he had finished with him poor Hickey was pretty well battered to pieces. However, after that, strange to say, they were bosom chums. I heard since that Hickey joined the Singapore pilot service and died out there.

Then there was Southby, whom I have already mentioned; he came, I believe, from Ventnor in the Isle of Wight. Foran, whose father was a bookseller in the Strand, was a thorough good sailorman, and he had also a splendid voice for chantey singing. Another apprentice was Rushbrooke. You could hardly call him a boy, for, although he was a first-voyager, he was twenty-one years of age. He was a big, hefty chap, and the rest of us were inclined to be a bit afraid of him on that account. However, in Calcutta, when we were washing the decks one day, he and I fell out over something. In my sane moments I should never have ventured to tackle him; but some uncomplimentary language he used with regard to my ancestry got my monkey up thoroughly and I went for him hands down. It was only about thirty seconds before we were separated, but during that time I had blacked both his eyes, split his lips, and made his nose bleed. He still had plenty of fight in him, and vowed that he would do all manner of things to me when breakfast time came along. I don't mind owning that I was scared out of my life when my hot fit was over, but, as it happened, my opponent thought better of it. He too had thought it over and realized that he had no right to say what he did, so, being a gentleman and a real good chap at heart, he came along and shook hands, and we were friends again.



This same fellow had written to his people saying that he did not like the sea life, and wanted to get a job in India; and while we were in Calcutta Captain White received a cable from the owner instructing him to let Rushbrooke leave the ship and give him a hundred pounds. Rushbrooke, of course, was tremendously set up, and I can see him now coming to wish us good-bye, two or three days afterwards, rigged out in the smartest of white clothes and full of talk about the white breeches and goodness knows what else he had ordered in readiness for the new job he had got. A week or two afterwards Captain White received a letter confirming the cablegram, and learned to his disgust that the amount instead of being a hundred pounds should have been a hundred rupees, or about seven pounds ten shillings. The skipper was very wild about it, but of course the money was gone beyond recall, unless he got any of it back from Rushbrooke's parents. Poor fellow! he died from sun-stroke very shortly after he got his job ashore, so he would have done better to stick to the sea.

There were other apprentices, including two who deserted in Sydney whose names I have clean forgotten, and everything else about them.

The steward was an old, old man who had sailed with Captain White for many years. He was a Scotsman and extremely mean; he hated the men and they heartily reciprocated the feeling. I can see him now serving out the lime-juice according to the Act, and it seemed to me that he took a positive delight in making his hands and arms as dirty as he could with scrubbing the cabin floor before dipping them into the bucket of lime-juice to stir up the sugar at the bottom.

The carpenter, like the steward, was a Scotsman and very thick with the captain. He was disliked

all round for that reason, but he was a first-rate "Chips" for all that. I remember that he made singlehanded a complete set of yards, topmasts, and top-gallant masts during the voyage.

"Sails" was another splendid man at his trade. During the time I was in the ship he must have cut and made two complete sets of sails, and the way he used to work was an example to anyone. Needless to say, he was not a Britisher, but a Dane or a Norwegian—I am not sure which.

The bos'n was a thorough seaman. He had a magnificent bass voice, which could be heard above the strongest wind, but he was nothing of a fighter, and so had very little control over the men. He was a black-bearded man, and during the twenty-two months I sailed with him I don't believe he ever washed lower than the collar of his shirt!

"The Tweed's" usual complement consisted of nine apprentices and sixteen A.B.'s, but on the passage out we had a double crew for'ard, namely, sixteen men signed on at the prevailing wages of £2 10s. a month, and sixteen at 1s. a month who were simply making a trip out in order to join ships on the Australian coast, where the pay was £7 to £8 a month. It proved, as will be seen later on, very lucky for us that we had these extra hands.

The accommodation for apprentices in "The Tweed" was infinitely superior to that in the "Tintern Abbey." We were berthed amidships, in accommodation which had been originally intended for second-class passengers. We had two-berth cabins—very small ones to be sure. I was fortunate enough to get a top bunk and so had the advantage of a big square window. This, although delightful in the Tropics, had its drawbacks in colder latitudes, for the window, being only loosely fitted, let in a plentiful supply of draughts.

The men's fore-castle was a magnificent one, with plenty of head-room, and accommodation for sixteen men on each side, and a couple of two-berth cabins at the after end for the petty officers. The length of the fore-castle head was fifty-seven feet.

The poop was sixty-six feet long, and had two entrances from the main deck. On the port side there was a short alleyway in which was the chief officer's cabin, looking out on deck, and a spare cabin next to it. A door from the alleyway led into the saloon. On the starboard side was a similar alleyway giving access to the second officer's room and a spare cabin adjoining; from this also a door opened into the saloon. The space between the two alleyways was occupied by the pantry. The saloon was about thirty feet long by twenty wide, with a long table running from the mizzen mast to the after bulkhead. At the end of the saloon were two magnificent cabins which were used by the captain as a sitting-room and sleeping cabin, and on each side were passengers' cabins, each with a bathroom.

I used to take a great pleasure in cleaning and polishing the rifles and old swords which hung in their racks round the masts. These were relics of the days when these—and even small cannons—used to be carried by all ships engaged in the East Indian and China trades, as a precaution against the pirates who swarmed in all the seas of the East.

We towed out of the East India Dock the day I joined; old Captain Willis, the owner of the ship, stood at the dockhead to watch us away. According to custom we apprentices lined the rail as the ship passed him, and, taking off our caps, called out "Good-bye, sir"; he responding with a "Good-bye, my lads," raising the tall white hat he always wore, whence his nickname of "White Hat."

We then started work, and very soon shook down into our places ; but it was not long before both apprentices and crew realized that "The Tweed" was what the latter called a "blinkin' workhouse." All the apprentices other than the first-voyagers were expected to do the work of men. The discipline was of the strictest ; in fact, it was cruel. For the slightest offence we apprentices were punished by being kept at work during our watch below.

"The Tweed" was a three skysail ship, and we always had to handle the skysail and royals on the main and mizen, leaving the light sails on the fore to the crew. Apprentices were never allowed on the bowsprit and jib-boom, Captain Willis having given orders to that effect.

All went well for the first part of the passage, and we soon learned that the ship we were in was one of the fastest afloat ; in fact, I doubt if any ship was superior to her in heavy weather. Mr. Norie, the mate, would have been a great sail-carrier if he had had all his own way, but Captain White was a very cautious man, and it was only when he was asleep that Mr. Norie had a chance to show what he could do with the ship.

We had fine weather as far as the Cape meridian, and at midnight, when the watch went below, every stitch was set to a light breeze. At two o'clock in the morning, in the second mate's watch, we were roused out by a loud cry from the look-out man of "All aback for'ard," followed almost immediately by "Foremast gone by the board." We in our bunks could only hear a great wind and the clashing of falling spars, but we could feel that the ship was on her beam ends. All hands scrambled out, and it was a scene of the wildest confusion which greeted our eyes.

The foretopmast with all the yards were over

the side. It was so dark that no one could tell what had happened to the main, but we could hear spars banging about aloft and sails thrashing themselves to pieces. Some of us laid aloft to secure everything we could on the main and mizen, while others were engaged in cutting the wreckage adrift. We found that the main royal mast had carried away and was thrashing about aloft, the main upper topsail yard was fractured, and the main skysail and royal yards were hanging by the rigging. The crew rose to the occasion splendidly, and went to work with a will, so that by five o'clock everything that was damaged on the main had been either secured or sent down. Oddly enough, there was no harm done on the mizen. The ship, of course, righted herself as soon as the sail had been got off her, but next morning at daylight she looked a sorry sight with nothing set except the main trysail.

We got her off before the wind, and it is an absolute fact that in the next twenty-four hours we did 240 miles with only the mainsail set, a record which I believe no other ship has ever made, nor ever could make. "The Tweed's" enormous square stern we always used to say was as good as a second mainsail, and it served her in good stead in that capacity on this occasion. During this time we were busy sending down the mizen yards and swaying up spare spars on the fore. The broken main topsail yard was fished, and a new foretopmast sent aloft, and thus jury-rigged the gallant old ship covered 2,000 miles in a week, and reached Sydney on July 28th, only ninety-three days out.

Sydney Harbour in 1882 was without doubt the most beautiful in the world. We entered it on a beautiful spring morning, with the sun shining as it only does shine in the Antipodes, and with all its



creeks and bays, like a hundred harbours in one, and the trees and shrubs growing down to the water's edge, it was a sight which will never fade from my memory. No doubt it is beautiful still, but it is not what it was in the days I write of. Now, alas ! houses and roads are to be seen everywhere, and in order that they might be constructed trees have been cut down wholesale.

"The Tweed" must have presented a woeful if interesting spectacle as she entered the harbour. However, she was not alone in misfortune, for the mail steamer "Austral," the crack steamship of her time, had sunk at her moorings the day before owing to her lower ports having been left open when coaling, and her masts and a part of her superstructure were visible above the waters of the bay. We dipped our flag in token of sympathy as we passed her by.

As soon as we moored the whole of the crew took themselves off, cursing the ship whole-heartedly. We towed to Waterman's Bay after discharging our cargo, and for three months we apprentices, with the bos'n and an A.B. called Robson, were hard at work re-rigging the ship.

This seaman Robson, a Chinaman by birth, was without doubt one of the finest sailormen that ever went to sea. He had a remarkable history. He was picked up in a canoe when he was a few months old, in which he had evidently been placed and sent adrift to die. The captain adopted him and trained him to the sea. What he did not know about sailorizing wasn't worth knowing. Of course, he was a regular Chinaman in appearance, but in every other way he could not be distinguished from an Englishman ; and although he was inclined to be silent, everybody liked him and respected him for his seamanlike qualities.



Mr. Norie, the bos'n, and Robson were, of course, the men who really re-rigged the ship ; we apprentices naturally could only lend a hand and do as we were told. The carpenter made the spars, and the sailmaker a new suit of sails. The wire for the rigging was all sent out from home. It took us three months' hard work to complete the job, and we then towed round to Newcastle to load coal for Manilla.

We got very little time ashore at Sydney, only occasionally in the evening and on Sundays, as we were kept at work from six in the morning until six at night. We greatly envied other apprentices, who seemed to get plenty of leave, and it was adding insult to injury when they used to ask us if ours was a reformatory ship !

We shipped a new crew in Newcastle. They were a poor lot, but they had to be paid the Australian wages of £7 to £7 10s. a month, and the new second mate £9 a month. Mr. Norie's feelings may be imagined, especially as regarded the second mate, as he was only getting £6 a month as chief officer. He evidently made up his mind to wear the crew and the second mate out, and as soon as we were out of the harbour he selected the weediest of the new hands and laid him out with a handspike, the result being that the poor devil was slightly imbecile from that time. This exploit had the effect of making the rest of the crowd think Norie a real bucko, and having thus put the fear of God into them he proceeded to work them, and us apprentices along with them, very nearly to death.

We had an uneventful passage to Manilla, and sailed right into the anchorage about two miles from the shore. Manilla was, of course, at that time owned by the Spaniards, and had no docks or wharves. The captains used to go ashore in their

own four-oared gigs, and the boats' crews vied with each other in smartness of handling, keeping stroke, and tossing their oars when going alongside a landing-stage or gangway.

The crew and ourselves were given three-cornered scrapers and put over the side in the blazing sun to scrape all the paint off to the bare teak, and then plane it so as to get a smooth surface. Day in and day out were we kept at it, and although there were twenty of us at work it can be imagined that it was a slow and wearisome business; and it was made more distasteful by the heat of the sun and the scrapings of the paint, which got into our eyes. However, by the time we left Manilla she was scraped and planed quite smooth, with the exception of the stern.

We all thought the ship a regular workhouse, but we derived a certain amount of comfort from the reflection that there were two American ships lying near by whose crews were treated even worse than we were.

One of these ships was the famous, or infamous, "Paul Revere," rightly looked upon as one of the hardest in the American merchant service. Her masts and yards were all scraped bright, and her decks were a greyish white owing to their having been coal-tarred before they were holystoned. Although we lay a full half mile away, we could often hear the officers blaspheming at the men, and see members of the crew scraping the spars as a punishment by the light of the moon. The other ship was an American barquentine whose crew were even worse treated. The poor devils had found the ship such a hell that they had deserted at Foo-chow, only to find themselves stranded in that place. They therefore had to crawl back to the ship and ask to be taken on again, and, being technically

deserters, their lives were made less worth living than ever.

There were two Nova Scotian barques at the anchorage, one of which carried a stewardess instead of a steward. She and the skipper had a row, and the latter thereupon arranged with the captain of the other "blue-nose" that she should marry his cook and act as stewardess in the other ship. The cook was bribed into falling in with this arrangement, and the two crews had a holiday to celebrate the happy event, which took place on board an English man-of-war lying in the harbour. There were great rejoicings all day and lots of bunting flying, and in the evening the steward of the second ship went over to the one the stewardess had left, and all was peace. However, the bride soon got tired either of her new husband or her new ship, or both, for four days later she went on board her old ship and made it up with the skipper, who promptly sent his new steward back and sailed away with the stewardess.

The English man-of-war was a full-rigged steam frigate, and it was a fine sight at sunset to see the royal and topgallant yards and sometimes the topgallant masts sent down in less than ten minutes, and at eight bells next morning sent up again, each mast crew vieing with the others as to who should get their yards crossed first.

When a ship sailed from Manilla it was the custom for each ship to try to get all sail set sooner than any of the others. The anchor was hove short, and when the first breath of the land wind sprang up about four o'clock in the afternoon it was both interesting and exciting to watch the different ships getting under way. The "Paul Revere" sailed the day before us, and I doubt whether a man-of-war with ten times the crew of

that ship could have made sail quicker than she did. She was lying at anchor one minute with her sails all loose ; five minutes afterwards she was on her way out of the harbour with every stitch set. She had, of course, like all American ships, the advantage of cotton ropes and patent blocks, which up to that time were not used in English ships owing to their being more expensive.

Every ship in the harbour had to have two soldiers on board, who took day and night duty, in order to see that no smuggling went on between the ship and the shore. These men were not allowed to leave the ship, and the captain of the guard used to row round occasionally about midnight without notice, to see that the soldiers were aboard each ship. The soldiers, knowing that the risk of being absent when the officer paid his surprise visit was very small, used to take turns now and then at going ashore to see their wives, and, as it happened, on the only occasion that the officer paid us a visit, one of them was on shore. The other soldier told Norie in broken English that unless we were able to get his comrade from shore, and intercept his captain's boat before he had finished his round, the absentee would be imprisoned and flogged.

Norie immediately called six of us—amongst them being my unlucky self—to man a boat and go off to find the missing man, taking his comrade with us. We had a two-mile pull after midnight, fortunately in glorious weather, and landed the soldier, who went off in search of the other and found him. We then had a four-mile pull chasing round after their officer's boat, and eventually overhauled it and came alongside. The fellow who had broken leave went on board, and in about ten minutes reappeared, the poorer for a fine of ten

dollars (which no doubt went into his captain's pocket), but vastly relieved at having escaped prison and a flogging.

The trip took us until about four o'clock in the morning, but although we looked for a little extra time for sleep, Norie hauled us out at six o'clock just the same.

When it came to our turn to sail, Norie had made every possible arrangement with a view to showing the other ships in the harbour how quickly he could get under way ; but, as it turned out, every blessed thing went wrong, and it was fully half an hour after we left the anchorage before we were under full sail. Needless to say, we poor beggars who had been doing the work came in for a full share of Norie's bad temper on account of the mess we had made of his show performance.

As soon as we were clear of Manilla, Norie began to work us harder than ever. His reason, as I found out afterwards, was to make the crew and the second mate so dissatisfied that they would ask to be discharged when the ship reached Calcutta, and in this, as it turned out, he was successful, for they all left the ship in that port.

The food, which had never been good, became rapidly worse and worse. We, of course, had only our Board of Trade allowance, which was scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, and when the quality as well as the quantity was at fault we were hungry all the time.

The biscuits were especially bad, being absolutely full of weevils and maggots. You could easily get rid of the weevils by taking the biscuit and banging it on its edge, when they would fall out in showers, but the maggots were a more difficult proposition. They used to hide themselves in crevices, and it was impossible to see them by the poor light we had



at night-time ; so we used to eat our biscuits and trust to luck that we weren't eating maggots. And if we were, we consoled ourselves by the reflection that we were only eating fresh meat !

All the same, we were far from satisfied with the poor grub we got, and after many days and weeks of growling about it amongst ourselves, I was deputed to lay the case before the captain. For some reason—what I don't know—I was always chosen to represent the apprentices on such occasions.

Accordingly, I marched aft to see Captain White when he was taking the sun at midday.

Mr. Norie, who was with him, spotted me as I came up the leeseide ladder.

"What do you want ? " he asked sharply.

"To see the captain, please, sir," I replied.

The captain thereupon turned round and inquired in his squeaky little voice what I wanted.

I told him that we were dissatisfied with the food, to which he replied :

"You are getting your Board of Trade allowance."

"Can we apprentices have more than that ? " I asked, which seemed to rile him. He replied angrily :

"Get away for'ard, and just remember that I will not make the slightest difference between you and the men ! "

Another time a cask of salt beef was opened, and when it was served out to us after boiling it proved to be absolutely putrid. The men dared not complain, but they came along to the apprentices' house to ask us what we intended doing about it.

I volunteered to go aft and speak to the captain ; so off I went, carrying the tin kid containing our whack of beef, while all hands stood for'ard waiting to see the blow-up.



Captain White and Mr. Norie were again taking the sun. When the captain saw me coming along with the tin in my hand he yelled out :

“ What do you mean coming aft like that ? ”

I mounted on to the poop, still with the kid in my hands, and boldly said :

“ I want you to look at this meat, sir. It is not fit to eat.”

The captain turned round to Mr. Norie, and said :

“ Get a knife and fork and see what it is like, Mr. Norie.”

The mate took a mouthful, gave one chew, slipped it out into his hand when Captain White was not looking, and threw it over the side. Then, to my astonishment, he said :

“ The beef is quite all right, sir.”

I was so taken aback that when Captain White ordered me off the poop I went without a word. But the men, who had been watching everything that went on, met me as I went for'ard, and, when I told them what had happened, they forgot their fear and made a simultaneous bolt aft, we apprentices following them. I shall never forget the look of dismay that spread over the faces of the captain and Mr. Norie when they saw the whole crowd coming quickly aft. They must have thought they were in for a mutiny, and when one of the men said that they had had no dinner because they could not eat the meat, Captain White was diplomatic enough to say that fresh tinned meat should be served out to them at once, and that the cask of meat which we said was rotten should be thrown overboard.

I often wondered why Norie or Gorell, the third mate, never gave me a hammering. I was certainly the most truculent boy in the ship, and I can only guess that, knowing I had held my own, and rather

more, in the two fights I had had with the other apprentices, they did not care to tackle me. For all that, I am sure that they could have easily made short work of me if they had tried.

Any other ship would have sailed through the Malacca Straits, but I suppose there wasn't enough hard work in that for "The Tweed," and as there was no wind we spent two days kedging through. The procedure was as follows: We were called at half-past five, started work at six, and went on until dark, when the anchor watch was set, which would be about nine o'clock, with half an hour off for breakfast and an hour for dinner. Two boats were used, with a kedge anchor in each. As soon as the ship had been hove up to one anchor by a rope, the rope of the other anchor, which had meanwhile been dropped ahead, was taken to the winch; and this business went on all day long, our progress being assisted by sailing when there was a breath of wind.

When the anchor had been let go for the night all sail had to be stowed harbour fashion, and the yards squared by lifts and braces, before we were allowed to go below. It was killing work, and we were glad when we were clear of the Straits and went back to the ordinary work of sailing the ship.

Soon after passing the Straits we fell in with the south-west monsoon, and a little later sighted the pilot brig off the mouth of the Hugli. There were about twenty ships waiting for a pilot, so we had to beat up and down until it was our turn. It was a welcome sight when we saw the flag go up which indicated that our pilot was ready. He was one of the real old type of Hugli pilot, with the air of an emperor at least, and he was accompanied by an English apprentice, two native servants, two native leadsmen, and about a ton of luggage.

As the south-west monsoon was blowing strong, the pilot undertook to sail the ship up the river as far as Garden Reach. We, of course, had nothing to do except making and taking in sail and attending to the braces. In the river we overhauled and passed a big sailing ship, the "Thirlmere," as if she had been at anchor, although she was carrying the same amount of sail that we were.

The captain looked very worried as we sailed over the celebrated "James and Mary" shoal, upon which so many ships have come to disaster, but the old pilot never turned a hair. We eventually anchored at Garden Reach, and next day we were towed up to our moorings off the Esplanade, just above what was known as the "Pepper Box."

Calcutta in those days had no docks, the passenger steamers lying alongside wharves near the centre of the town. Tramp steamers were unknown, and if my memory serves me right no steamer came to Calcutta unless she carried passengers. This being the case, sailing ships were always in demand, but when we arrived we found that freights had fallen so low in other parts of the world that all the owners had sent their ships seeking better charters at Calcutta. The river was choked with sailing ships, which lay at their moorings, four abreast, from above the Esplanade right down to Kidderpore.

There were some magnificent and interesting ships amongst them, and I will just note a few which I can call to mind.

The "Earl of Shaftesbury" was a four-masted barque which, like "The Tweed," had started life as a steamship. The "Celestial Empire" was a three skysail yarder and beautifully sparred. Then there was the "Accrington," an old iron ship whose sides were so thin from old age that when the men were chipping her plates they actually chipped a

hole clean through her hull! In those days they did not have to trouble about calling for a survey, but the ship's carpenter just put a plug in the hole and the ship sailed, but whether she ever reached home or not I don't know. She not only had the distinction of being the oldest iron ship there, but her captain was far the oldest skipper; he was close upon eighty years of age and still able to do his work.

The "Crown of England" and the "Ecclefechan" were two new ships built for cargo-carrying. The latter had lines as awful as her name, but she was noteworthy for being square-rigged on all four masts, which was not so usual then as it became later. The "Pericles" was, of course, the well-known clipper of the Aberdeen White Star Line. She was a beautiful little ship, as were all those belonging to that firm; but her day is now done, as I see that she has just been sold by the Norwegians for breaking up.

Then there was the "Blair Athol," a large well-found ship with a very young chief officer, whom I used to admire greatly for the smart way in which he did his work; and others I remember are the "Knight of St. Michael," a magnificent "four-poster" on her first voyage; the "Chersonese" (called by sailors the "Curse of Jasus"), another converted steamer dating back to the 'fifties which had turned out a very fast sailing ship; the "Yarra Yarra," a pretty little barque which came in under jury rig, having been dismasted in the Bay of Bengal; and the "Ladakh," one of Bate's ships, and the very first, I should imagine, to serve out such unheard-of luxuries to her crew as butter and marmalade.

We lay in Calcutta for six months. Our owner, Captain Willis, would not accept the low freights

## 44 YARNS OF AN OLD SHELLBACK

ruling in the port, and we saw every ship that was in the river when we arrived sail for home ; others arrived in their places, loaded, and sailed again, and still we lay on. We experienced a rainy season and a hot season, and, rainy or hot, no consideration was shown to us apprentices either by Captain White or Mr. Norie. In the hottest part of the day in the middle of the hot season we were kept aloft serving the new backstays down, or blacking the yards and painting the masts white. For the latter job we were given paint brushes, but for the yards we only had a swab and a tin of black varnish, and Heaven help us if one drop was detected on the deck by the lynx eye of Mr. Norie. In blacking the yards, the arm you were working with was soon black up to the elbow, while the other also got just as black with holding on to the yard. Our faces quickly got black too, as we had to use our black hands to brush off the flies which buzzed round us, and with the heat of the sun acting on the black varnish the skin was burnt clean off.

In other ships with full crews these jobs used to be done in the early morning or late afternoon, and many of them allowed their crews a couple of hours' rest during the hottest part of the day. Not so with us : we were at it from six in the morning until six at night, and the captain of a ship lying alongside was so indignant that he called over one day that our captain ought to be darned well shot for working us so hard. Very kind of him ; but we only got a worse time than before in consequence !

Luckily for us, however, all this work and the lack of consideration we got did not affect our spirits in the least. We were always ready for mischief, and as soon as the mate's back was turned we were up to some prank or other. We were only allowed on shore as a very special favour, and it shows



what fine condition we were in physically that we were able after a hard day's work to go ashore, have a good time at the Bethel or somewhere else, come on board at two o'clock in the morning, and be ready at six o'clock to start on the daily round as usual.

One of our favourite diversions was to climb over the fence into Fort William any time after 11 p.m., when every one except the sentries had gone to bed, and make our way to the covered swimming-pool, just off the parade ground, for a cool frolic in the water. I have often been in the pool with only one chum at one o'clock in the morning, but we used to get a bit scared by the hyenas coming down and howling.

Even over our work we managed to knock up a bit of fun now and again. When we were washing the 'tween decks and the third mate had gone up on deck, we used to have gay old times heaving our wet rags at each other until the mate, hearing the row we were making, would suddenly appear and start cursing us and saying what he would do if he caught us at it again. We also used to have rat hunts; in moving the dunnage wood a rat would be seen, and we would all drop everything and start chasing him round with sticks.

The apprentice Hickey during one of these hunts was fool enough to clutch his trousers' pocket suddenly and yell that a rat had gone up his leg and that he had got hold of it. We naturally thought that it had done so, for Hickey was dancing about as if he had got a bad scare, and holding on to his pocket; so thinking that he was really alarmed and that the rat might bite him, I took out my knife and cut a bunch out of his trousers where he said the rat was. And there was his hand holding his tobacco pouch. To this day I don't know



whether he was really fooling or whether he thought there *was* a rat there ; anyway I spoiled his trousers for him.

We had awnings fore-and-aft the ship, and as there were only six apprentices we had a job to furl them in squalls, although, of course, we had the help of the third mate, the bos'n and Robson the Chinese sailor. It was particularly hard on us when we were called in the night-time, for the squall was generally accompanied by torrential rain, and it took very nearly two hours to furl the awnings. But no matter what length of time it took us, we were still roused out at five o'clock in the morning, no allowance being made for the sleep we had lost, although an hour's extra sleep was always given in other ships, even with full crews, for having had to do similar work.

The cook having been paid off, we had a temporary native substitute, who cooked the meat so badly that no one could have eaten it who was not positively starving. Consequently we not only spent all our money in the bumboat buying eggs, bread, butter, and fruit, but when the money was done we got rid of our clothes so that we could get something to eat. The result was that none of us had many clothes in our chests by the time we left Calcutta.

Friday was the day we hated more than any in the seven. At six in the morning on that day the six of us—our numbers had dwindled to six by then—started to holystone the decks, and kept at it the whole of the day and the following morning until they were as white as snow ; then the brass-work was cleaned and the ropes flumished down. At four o'clock a crowd of the captain's Baptist friends used to come on board to tea, and when we heard them saying that the vessel was as clean

as a man-of-war and what a splendid man the captain must be to keep his ship so smart, we apprentices used to look round for some quiet spot where we could retire to blow off our feelings. Oh, how we used to loathe those visitors of his with their superior airs !

Day in and day out, it was the same hard, weary round. As I think of those times I hear again the native soldiers practising the bugle-calls in Fort William, just opposite to where we lay. I smell again the close, smoky, and by no means fragrant air of Calcutta, and in my ears are once again the never-ceasing cries of the Brahmin kites as they circled round the ship on the look-out for galley refuse. I see again, and even smell, the dead bodies of native men and women floating down the river and getting entangled in the ships' moorings, for in those days the sacred Hugli River was used as a burial-place for those who could not afford cremation, and indeed it may be still for all I know.

Times have changed since I was there in 1882. The character of the natives has altered, sailing ships are no longer to be seen, but I guess there is still the same old blazing sun, the same old muddy river, the same old close smell, and the same old cries from the Brahmin (or as sailors used to call them "Bromley") kites. For me Calcutta has no pleasant associations, and I thank Heaven I shall never see the place again, except in the eye of memory.

Towards the end of our six months' weary stay at our moorings Mr. Norie found it a difficult matter to know what work to give us to do, so he hit on the idea of our restoring the 'tween decks to the immaculate condition they used to be in when the ship was a frigate. The 'tween decks were all teak

like the rest of the vessel, but of course they were badly marked by the many cargoes she had carried. We had to plane off the rough surface, then holystone it, and with the top deck painted white and the sides of the ship a light green, the 'tween decks looked beautiful when the job was done. We loved this work because it was pretty cool compared with the blazing sun on deck.

At last one joyful day native stevedores came on board and began to load a cargo of jute. We shipped a new crew and a new second mate. The latter had been for about twenty years in coasting steamers and had forgotten all about the handling of a sailing ship. I rather fancy he was unpaid, for although he was quite a decent old chap he was not a sailing-ship man; and yet he was never found fault with either by the skipper or Norie. The new crew were a poor lot, all wasters, with the exception of one very stout fellow of the sea-lawyer type, who turned out to be the only real sailor among them.

We towed down the Hugli, and then found that all the running rigging had rotted through six months' exposure to the weather in Calcutta, and it took us hours to make sail. All went well after that until we reached the Cape, when we ran into a north-westerly gale and had a hot time of it beating against the wind and against the Agulhas current. During this time I remember seeing the famous "Whiteadder," and a beautiful barque with painted parts called the "Devoran," which, sailing before the wind, presented a lovely picture of a ship. We got the south-east trades in Mr. Norie's watch. He immediately set every stitch, and I remember hearing the men say that he would carry the ruddy spars out of her, for she was absolutely staggering with everything—even to skysails—set.

Captain White was asleep at the time or else there would have been trouble, but by the time he came on deck the wind was moderating to the usual strength of the south-east trade. We passed every ship that we saw, and as we neared the Azores we sighted a derelict ahead of us. Of all the sad sights to be seen at sea, I think a derelict ship is the saddest. On approaching her we found her to be a three-masted barquentine. She had evidently been in collision, for her stem was damaged and all three masts were lying fore-and-aft the deck.

We were running before a fresh gale, so Captain White considered it too risky to send a boat off to examine her. As she was flying light she had evidently suffered no damage to her hull, so we left her.

North of the Azores we encountered a westerly gale, which, gradually increasing to hurricane force, necessitated our reducing sail until we were running before it under goosewinged lower topsails. I heard Captain White describing this gale afterwards as the worst he had ever experienced during his forty-five years at sea. The mountainous seas carried away the port side of the break of the poop, a teakwood bulkhead, and knocked six cabins into one, washing away every mortal thing Mr. Norie possessed except his monkey, which clung on for dear life.

The ship was running so heavily that Captain White decided to risk the hazardous operation of heaving her to, which, as every sailor knows, is only done in a hurricane as a sort of last hope. Captain White and Mr. Norie, standing by the wheel, watched for the right moment to put the helm down; and as the ship came up into the wind the cry went up "Stand by for your lives!" However, luckily the manœuvre was successfully performed, and every

credit is due to the skipper for the seamanlike way in which he handled his ship.

By this time all the new lanyards had stretched to such an extent that the resulting slackness of the rigging endangered the spars ; owing to the seas constantly breaking aboard all we could do was to frap the backstays and rigging together, and Captain White decided to have the royal and sky-sail yards sent down. We managed to get them down, but anyone who has ever sent yards down in a hurricane will realize the kind of job it was. We had been hove-to twenty-four hours when the wind moderated, and although it was still blowing hard we set all sail and made for the mouth of the Channel.

When I came on deck at four o'clock next morning in the mate's watch he, either out of bad temper or for sheer devilment, sent me up to the mizen topgallant yard to keep a look out for the Lizard light. It was early February and bitterly cold, and as I had either worn out most of my clothes or else sold them in Calcutta to buy food, I had very little on. There I had to sit or stand on the yard for an hour before I saw the loom of the Lizard light, and I shall never forget the relief and joy I felt when I sung out that the lights were showing and heard Mr. Norie respond with, " Come down out of that ! " I could scarcely move one foot below the other coming down the rigging, I was so perished with the cold ; still it didn't seem to do me any harm.

We romped along up Channel, and a glorious moment it was when we gave our ropes to the tug-boat which was to tow us up the London River. It was rainy and blowing hard, but Norie kept up his reputation to the last moment by making us go aloft and stow the sodden sails harbour fashion.

Then we had to square the yards by lifts and braces, and the last job of all was the cleaning of the brasswork in the pouring rain !

But we got into dock at last ; and, oh, how welcome was the sound of Mr. Norie's shout of " That will do, lads," which signified that we were free men at last !



## CHAPTER IV

### I MAKE A VOYAGE IN THE "CUTTY SARK"

**T**HAT was the last I saw of "The Tweed." Four years afterwards she was totally dismantled off the Cape, when on a voyage from Trincomalee to New York, and was picked up and towed into Algoa Bay by one of Donald Currie's coasting steamers. Shortly after she anchored a south-easterly gale sprang up, and thirteen sailing ships were driven ashore. "The Tweed's" anchors dragging, she got into shoal water and bumped her stern post out. She was afterwards condemned and broken up, and her frames were used as arches for the roof of a church then being built in Port Elizabeth.

All the clothes I had to go home in were those I had been wearing for the last two weeks during the bitter cold weather, namely, a white linen suit with a light blue serge on top, and sea-boots to complete the costume. I expect I looked a pretty disreputable customer, but I remember how hurt I felt when my mother, after her first embrace, exclaimed :

"Oh, good heavens, do go and have a bath at once !"

I naturally wanted to sit and talk about my experiences, but off I had to go and have my bath. Then I went straight to bed, and slept the clock round, which shows that, although I did not know it, I was thoroughly worn out.

I had only been at home six weeks when I received



THE "CUTTY SARK"



notice to join the famous ship "Cutty Sark." She was commanded at that time by Captain Moore, who had spent most of his time in the China clippers. He was a bearded man of middle height, with a deep voice; and though he was exceedingly reserved—he seldom spoke to anyone—I found him very kind. I rather think Captain White, who had no love for me, had tried to set him against me, for one day when I was at the wheel Captain Moore had occasion to find fault with me, and told me that he had heard all about me from my former captain. I was deeply hurt that he should have received a bad report of me, but I looked him straight in the face and said:

"You will always find that I will do my best, sir."

From that time until I left Captain Moore gave me every encouragement to do as I had said, and when I finished my indentures he gave me a most excellent reference, which is still among my most valued possessions.

The mate of the "Cutty" was named Dimint; he also was a bearded man, and though a good seaman he was no disciplinarian. He made two or three more voyages in the ship after I left her, under the famous Captain Woodget, but he was one of those men who seem destined never to rise higher than mate. I never saw him again until 1901, when I visited a ship in the West India Dock of which he turned out to be mate. Of course he did not recognize me until I told him who I was, and then we had a fine old yarn together. In 1903 he called at my office and implored me to give him a job on shore, as he was sick of the sea and the unsailorlike crews that he had to handle. All I could offer him was a night-watchman's job, which he thankfully accepted, and he did his work well

until he died a few years ago. It always used to hurt me to hear the poor old chap call me "sir," when I remembered how in my early days it was he who had the "sir" from me.

The second officer, Egan, was one of those colourless people of whom one seems to remember nothing but a name; but Jacques, the senior apprentice and acting third mate, was not only a real good sort, but very well up to his work. He afterwards joined the Eastern Telegraph service, and I kept in touch with him until he died; at that time he was chief officer of the "Mirror."

The "Cutty" carried eight apprentices and the same number of able seamen. One apprentice was Jackson, the son of the chief manager of the London and Shanghai Bank. He was quite a good sailor-man, but being a good-looking chap he had a great opinion of himself, and liked to go on shore in brass-bound rig, when he always received many a "glad eye" from the girls. He afterwards joined the P. & O. Company and became chief officer of the "Nubia," but, thinking to better his position, he went out to the Australian coast, and the poor chap very shortly afterwards died.

Sykes, my special chum, was a third-year boy, son of a clergyman in Yorkshire. He also joined the P. & O. Company, and died of typhoid in Bombay when he was third officer.

Then there was Farnham, also good at his work. He afterwards went into the British India coasting trade, and I heard that he also died out there.

Another apprentice was named Vaughan. He was a red-headed second-voyager who put us all to shame on the first night we were together by kneeling down and saying his prayers. He had a daily-text roll, which he scrupulously turned over each day, and there is no doubt that seeing him so

religious made a great impression on the rest of us, though I fear that our respect for his piety did not go so far as to make us emulate his example!

Sad to relate, later on, when running the easting down we not only lost our respect for him but he lost his own for himself. It came on to blow hard and all hands were called on deck to shorten sail. We were all out on the upper topsail yard, trying to smother the sail, when we heard someone using some of the worst language even we had ever heard. Imagine our astonishment when we discovered that the voice was that of our immaculate Vaughan, who was letting off his feelings because the sail had flapped up and hit him on the nose! After that poor Vaughan gave up the religious rôle. I never saw him again after I finished my time.

We were a hefty lot of lads, and had evidently been selected for that reason, in order that a smaller crew forward could be carried; but the "Cutty Sark" handled like a yacht, and the six of us who were free to do the work when on watch found no difficulty at all in working the ship. As soon as she cast off the tug we realized what a fast ship we were in. She simply slid through the water, and we overhauled and passed every ship ahead of us, sometimes going past them as if they were at anchor. She seemed to sail equally well on every point of the wind. Perhaps she did best with strong quartering breezes, but just the flap of her sails was enough to send her along, and if there was any wind at all she would move through the water at a greater speed than any other ship under the same circumstances.

I found the "Cutty Sark" a far happier ship to be in than "The Tweed." The discipline was strict, but the captain and his officers never said a word to us so long as we did our work. We went



about our duties with a better spirit, and the memory of the way we had been bullied in "The Tweed" soon faded from my mind. Of course, with such a small crew as the ship carried, we boys had to do men's work, for which we were fully qualified, and no difference was made between ourselves and the men as regarded either work or treatment.

The accommodation for apprentices was in a small house situated on the fore side of the after hatch, and eight of us lived in a space of about fifteen feet by eighteen. We were, however, very comfortable and happy, except when the ship was taking water aboard, when it was nine chances out of ten that we got a ducking when we opened the door. The "Cutty Sark" was a ship that would stand up to be driven, but she was very lively in a heavy sea, and used to jerk instead of lying down smoothly to an extra gust of wind. Well do I know it, for one day off the Horn I had gone along to the galley to get my breakfast, which on that occasion consisted of a soaked biscuit with a lump of fat frizzling on it. With this and my tin of coffee both my hands were full. It was blowing hard, and the ship as usual was jerking considerably. On my way aft someone stopped me to speak to me; just then the ship gave an extra jerk, and, both my hands being full of my precious breakfast, I was unable to save myself. I must have turned a half somersault, for the first point that I struck was my nose! I had the greatest difficulty in stopping the bleeding; in fact, I thought my nose was broken. But it was no use making a fuss, so I turned in, and when the watch was over went to take my turn at the wheel as usual. I had not been there long when Captain Moore suddenly paused in his pacing of the poop to say in his gruff voice:

"Who gave you that knock on the nose?"

I replied, "No one, sir," and he turned away, but he looked as if he were saying to himself, "Bally young liar!"

My nose soon regained its proper shape, but I carry the scar even now, and shall do so to the grave, by way of souvenir of the old "Cutty Sark."

The men, who were an extremely able lot of fellows, thought that as usual they could boss us about, and for a time we, not knowing any better, allowed them to do so. When we got into the Tropics we apprentices started to pommel each other in the dog-watch with a pair of boxing gloves someone had brought on board. We pommelled pretty hard, too, and the men used to sit night after night and watch our bouts. After a time we got tired of boxing always with the same opponents, so we went for'ard and challenged the men to put the gloves on. There were no takers; and after that the boot was on the other leg. Instead of the men bullying us, it was we who bossed them; indeed, it wasn't long before we were absolute buckos where they were concerned, when they hung back from taking their share in going aloft to take in the light sails.

We had a fine run down to the Line and soon got the south-east trade. I remember now as if it were yesterday standing at the wheel, the ship being closehauled at the time, and Captain Moore turning to me to say:

"Look at her, my boy, and take note what I say. No other ship could do what this ship is doing now, namely, thirteen and a half knots on the wind."

She was magnificent to sail by the wind; I have been at the wheel for two hours and never moved the spoke out of my hand, only the distance that my arm could reach being sufficient to steer her by.

Running the easting down she simply flew through the water. Standing at the wheel it was terrifying to see the huge seas rolling up after her. Every time she dipped her stern they looked as if they must swamp her, but I never saw her poop a sea.

The night before we got to Newcastle the fore royal stay carried away, causing the royal mast to fracture and bend. We took in the fore royal, and next morning, when we arrived in Newcastle, we did not look very shipshape with the bent royal mast. We immediately sent the royal yard down, which was a very risky thing to do, as there was a chance of the whole royal mast giving way in the process; however, the only harm it did was to extend the fracture. We then sent down the topgallant yard, and for some reason or other the chief officer decided that the best way would be to break the royal mast off before sending down the topgallant mast. In its fall it carried away the cross-trees, and the whole job was done in such an unseamanlike manner that it made us the laughing-stock of Newcastle.

Our cargo consisted of general merchandise, including a considerable quantity of cases of wines and spirits, and I heard afterwards that there were claims for pilferage amounting to close upon three hundred pounds.

The steward was a young and very decent sort of chap, but I fear that he was responsible for a good deal of this pilferage. He was always calling us apprentices into his cabin to "crack a bottle of champagne"; although we never asked where it came from, we had a pretty shrewd idea that he used to get it when he went below for flour from the tanks, round which the cases of wine were stored. But, of course, we did not split when

Captain Moore wanted to know how the pilferage happened.

The "Cutty Sark" was a favourite ship in Newcastle; nearly everybody kept open house for us apprentices, and we came in for a good deal of jealousy from the boys of other ships when they saw us cutting them out with their best girls. We had a real good time in port, and one day had a holiday in consequence of a barque called the "Gladstone" challenging us at cricket. We accepted the challenge but got hopelessly beaten.

Rugg, the mate of the "Gladstone," succeeded to the command of the ship about that time. Later, when the "Neotsfield" was built for the same owners, he was put in charge of her, and remained in her until she was sold immediately before the war. He was then offered the command of a pretty little barque, the "Dee," trading between Mauritius and Australia. He was unlucky enough to fall in with the German raider "Moewe," and was a prisoner on board that ship for several months.

We loaded wool at Newcastle for London, and presently took the tugboat to tow us outside, where we started to make sail. A strong westerly gale was blowing, and as soon as we got the topsails set the tug had to cast off in a great hurry, otherwise we should have been on top of her!

Christmas Day we spent off the Horn under very uncomfortable conditions, running before the gale with every stitch set. My job on Christmas morning was to help to bend a new topgallant sail, and a mighty cold one it was, the worst of it all being that when one got perished with cold there was no fire except that in the galley, and that, of course, was prohibited to us. I remember that we passed a ship beating against the gale, and I have often wondered what the crew of that ship thought when

they saw us running before the gale with everything set. We sailed between two enormous icebergs, and although they were two miles away the cold was much greater while we were in their vicinity.

We took twenty-two days to get to the Horn, which was mighty good going, and then we made for home, and had an uneventful passage to Dungeness, where we took our pilot. Shortly afterwards a tugboat came alongside, but the skipper opened his mouth so wide that Captain Moore refused to take him.

"You're making a big mistake, cap'n," he said; "there's an easterly wind comin' along. Better think twice about it!"

However, Captain Moore sat tight, and presently, the breeze freshening, we soon left the tugboat behind, and in less than an hour she was out of sight! Another tugboat ultimately took us in tow for London. When passing Ramsgate we hoisted the house-flag, as was the custom in all Willis's ships, so that Captain Willis, who spent much of his time there, would know we had arrived.

Just before we reached Gravesend we apprentices were ordered to put a harbour stow on the crossjack. I was in charge of the bunt, and, all of us being excited at getting home, I started the chantey "Paddy won't pay for his boots," and all the others joined lustily in the chorus, much to Captain Moore's amusement and Mr. Dimint's indignation. And that, as it turned out, was the last time I was to be on a sailing ship's yard.

We did not stop at Gravesend, but towed right up and arrived in the East India Dock late at night. The men were told by Mr. Dimint that they had finished, but we apprentices received orders to wash the decks down before we left the ship the next morning. That was on a Sunday, so our curses



THE "CUTTY SARK" AS SHE NOW LIES IN FALMOUTH HARBOUR





were loud and deep ; but there it was. The work had to be done, and those who, like myself, lived in London, managed to get home in time for dinner.

That was the last voyage I made in sail, and it is one I am proud to remember. To have served in such a vessel as the "Cutty Sark" is a memory worth the having, and when, a year or two ago, I once more gripped the old ship's familiar wheel-spokes, forty-four years seemed to slip off my shoulders, and I was a boy again.

## CHAPTER V

### I GO INTO STEAM

**I** NEXT put in a period of study at Maxwell's Academy in the Minories for my examination for second mate. The navigation part of the examination in those days was a very simple affair ; indeed, any fool could do it, as it only covered an ordinary " day's work." The seamanship side of the examination, however, was extremely stiff. It was generally taken by Captain Steele, who demanded a very high standard in a candidate before he would pass him. He thought nothing of failing a man if he was not perfectly sure of his ground, and had a good try at catching me tripping. After putting me through a test for box-hauling a ship, he said :

" Oh, you would, would you ? " at one point in my explanation, and, if I had not known by repute what kind of man he was, he might have made me waver. However, I stuck to my guns, and replied :

" Yes, I would, sir."

" Well, that's all right ! " was his comment ; and I passed. And a proud man I was when I received the blue ticket entitling me to be granted my certificate.

So here I was at last a fully-fledged second mate : twenty years old, five foot ten in height, eleven stone eight in my birthday suit, and without an ounce of superfluous flesh on my body. I only wish I were as fit physically now as I was at that

time. I was as hard as iron, my muscles were fully developed, and I was, I think, stronger than most young fellows of my age.

The next thing was to find a berth, which was as hard to come by in those days as it is now. Naturally my thoughts turned to a second mate's job in a sailing ship, and with that end in view I betook myself to the East India Docks.

A ship called the "Oneida" rather took my fancy. She was a large vessel, which had formerly been a steamer. I marched up the gangway with all the assurance in the world, and was greeted by a stout, elderly man in carpet slippers with the inquiry :

"What do you want?"

"Is the captain aboard?" I asked.

"I'm the captain."

"Do you want a second mate, sir?" I continued.

"You've got a damn cheek," said he, looking me up and down, "to think you can go as second mate in a ship like this."

"I should not apply if I didn't think I was capable of it," quoth I, to which he rudely replied :

"You'd better go home to your mammy! I can get extra masters to sign on as third mates—and glad of the chance!"

This made me lose my temper, and I retorted :  
"They must be darned hard up, that's all!"

The skipper made one jump in my direction, but I was down the gangway like a streak of light.

I gave myself time to cool down a bit, and then had another shot. This time the ship I selected was a pretty little barque called the "Boadicea," of about six hundred tons register. She looked like a toy ship beside the big "Oneida," which must have been of considerably over 2,000 tons.

I went on board, and seeing nobody about went to the cabin and knocked on the door. A woman answered my knock.

"Is the captain aboard?" I asked.

"What do you want?" she inquired.

I didn't see what business it was of hers; however, I replied, "I want to see the captain."

"What for?" she asked again.

"I want to know whether he wants a second mate."

"Have you been second mate before?" she asked.

I said I hadn't, so she said at once, "Well, you won't do."

By this time I was getting a bit rattled, and I retorted, "That's for the captain to decide, not you!"

"Let me tell you, young man," said the good lady, "that I have as much say as my husband when it comes to taking on officers!" With which she banged the cabin door in my face!

I went away wondering what the sea was coming to. I decided that it was no good tramping the docks in quest of a berth, but resolved to try my luck at the London offices. Day after day I spent in calling on the different shipowners, and at last I got a telegram telling me to call at a certain office at once. I lost no time in answering the summons, and learned that they wanted a second mate for the four-master "Buckingham."

The captain interviewed me, and apparently took a fancy to me, for when I refused to accept the wage of £4 a month, which I found was all the job was worth, he spent over an hour trying to get me to change my mind. I was more than a little tempted, for I liked the ship and he seemed an exceedingly decent chap, but I valued my services at £5 a month

at least, and could not bring my pride to climb down.

Amongst my mother's friends was a steamship owner, who, hearing that I was looking for a job, sent for me and offered me a berth in one of his steamers. He told me that he could not give me a second mate's job straight away and his ships did not carry third officers; but he would arrange to sign me on as third mate, provided I took on the duties of boatswain. The wages were only £5 a month, but if I pleased the captain I should soon be promoted to second mate. I wanted to stay in sail, but as I naturally did not want to go on indefinitely living on my mother, I decided to accept the offer.

I was given a letter to the captain of the S.S. "Guildford" appointing me as third mate and boatswain. I went down to Penarth, where the ship was lying, by train, and arrived there about five o'clock in the evening. I went aboard the ship at once, and, never having been in a steamer in my life, I thought her a splendid vessel. As a matter of fact, she was of only 1,475 tons register, and although an ocean-going steamer was much smaller than many of the coasting vessels of the present day. I found an old man in uniform pottering about on deck, so I told him what I wanted. He told me that he was the chief officer, and that the captain was aboard and I had better go and see him. I went to the cabin and the steward showed me in to the captain.

He was a man of about thirty-eight, with a fair beard, five foot eight or so in height, and with a tremendous chest. He came from Sunderland. I found out afterwards that he was reckoned as the toughest nut of all the skippers hailing from that port, and on that account was nicknamed "Bully



Pringle." He could not speak without qualifying every other word with a more or less sanguinary adjective, which I have had to represent by means of substitutes in writing down his remarks.

I presented him with the letter from the owners, which he read, and at once said :

" I don't want any sanguinary third mate. I want a bos'n."

" I'm quite prepared to act in that capacity," I said.

" H'm ! The bos'n, let me tell you, is the hardest-working man on board in my ship. He's not only got to work himself, he's got to show the men an example."

" I have been accustomed to hard work, sir," I replied truthfully.

" Can you use your fists ? " he asked.

" Well, I think I can hold my own, sir," I said modestly.

" Thinking is no ruddy use to me. The man I want as bos'n has got to be able to down any man in the blinking ship—except me ! "

" Well, I will do my best, sir," I assured him.

" That's no ruddy good ! You've got to do *more* than your best in *my* ship."

I again assured him that I would try, and apparently that satisfied him, for he told me to get ready and go ashore with him. I put my things into a big empty two-bunk berth under the bridge, next to the carpenter's cabin. After my quarters as an apprentice, it seemed to me quite sumptuous, although I afterwards found that, being just opposite the stokehold door, it was not only very noisy but very hot and dirty.

I then went along and told the steward to let the captain know I was ready, and presently out he came and we went ashore. We took a bus into

Cardiff, and our first port of call there was the Imperial Hotel. The captain, turning to me, asked me what I would take to drink.

"A glass of beer, sir," I replied; when, to my great astonishment, he flew into a tremendous rage.

"Who the hell are you sir-ing?" he demanded. "Haven't you got enough blooming sense to know that when we are on shore we are equals? But, by Gad, when we step on board the ship again, if you give me any blinking back chat there'll be holy red murder!"

We spent the evening together, and the whole of the time he kept on bragging about his fighting powers, and how every man he hit had to be taken to hospital, as with the very small hands upon which he plumed himself, and the powerful muscles behind them, he claimed that he drove a hole through a man when he struck him! As a matter of fact, in the course of the voyages I made with him I never saw him strike anyone who was not too drunk to defend himself. At the same time he certainly lived up to his reputation of being Bully Pringle in other ways, and every man who sailed with him was afraid to give him a back answer. It just shows how successful bluff sometimes is.

Pringle was a holy terror to those who were physically his inferiors. One voyage we had a steward who was rather a poor specimen of humanity, and Pringle used to haze him most unmercifully.

I heard Pringle one day call the steward, who happened at the time to be on deck, and so, of course, did not hear. I shouted out to him, and told him the captain wanted him, and from my room, which commanded a good view of the after saloon, I saw the steward come in through one door just as Pringle came in through the other, lathering his hands with a cake of soap. He was in a

devil of a temper, and demanded of the steward, of course with all the usual adjectives, why he didn't come when he was called, at the same time letting fly the cake of soap, which caught the steward fair and square in the eye with a smack that could have been heard fifty yards away. The steward let out a terrific yell, and no wonder ; and Pringle hastily retired, afraid for once that he had gone a bit too far. However, the result was no worse than one of the loveliest black eyes I have ever seen.

Another time I happened to see from my berth, to my great amazement, Pringle with a paper in his hand from which he was sprinkling dust and dirt all over the floor of the after cabin. I had hardly time to wonder what he was at when he went to the door and yelled out " Steward ! " in a voice which as usual could be heard all over the ship on a calm day. The steward came running along, and Pringle, catching hold of him by the scruff of his neck, dragged him into the cabin and tried to rub his nose on the floor which he had just been strewing with dust, at the same time using the most fearful language because, so he said, he hadn't done his ruddy work properly ! Of course the captain's treatment of the steward soon became known, and the poor devil became the butt of the ship, every one making fun of him in the sure knowledge that he couldn't retaliate.

One day, however, the engineers' mess-boy started to cheek him. The boy being only a weakly-looking stripling of sixteen, the steward thought that for once he could get a bit of his own back, and very soon they came to blows. It was always customary to allow members of the crew to fight it out, so we all stood round to see fair play, and for a few seconds it looked as if the steward were going to

hammer the life out of the boy. Then the boy got in a lucky blow which dazed the steward, and followed that up with a regular shower of punches, positively crying with fear the whole time. We all stood round roaring with laughter, for it was the funniest of sights to see the boy getting the better of his opponent with the tears streaming down his cheeks.

As third mate and bos'n it was my duty to relieve the bridge while the other officer had his meal with the captain. One day, after being relieved by the officer of the watch so that I might go below to get my supper, I found the skipper sitting in his place. A tin of sardines was open on the table, and, having a very healthy appetite and being also particularly fond of sardines, I had helped myself to one, two, three, four, and was just going to take a fifth, when the old man, who had apparently been watching me, yelled out :

" Now then, you —— ! What the blazes do you think you're doing ? Sardines are meant for a ruddy relish, not for a ruddy feed ! " So I had to be content with the four I had already secured.

Another time we were all having supper with the skipper in port, consisting of Irish stew. He was in a beast of a temper, and was simply shovelling out the stew and pushing our plates across to us as rudely as he could. By the time he came to himself the stuff in the dish was getting low, and with the tablespoon he was using he fished up, not, as he expected, a nice piece of juicy meat, but a filthy clay pipe half full of tobacco. Fortunately none of us had eaten any. The skipper let out a yell for the steward, and told him to go along to the galley and fetch the ruddy cook, who was a big buck nigger. While we were waiting for the cook to appear Pringle poured the stew from the plates back into

the dish, and when the cook arrived, wreathed in smiles, he held up the pipe and asked him what the devil he meant by serving it up in the dinner.

"Dat—why, dat my pipe, sah," said the nigger. "I put dat pipe down, an' couldn' say whar I put him, sah!"

"Well, you put it in the blinking stew!" roared Pringle; and with that he took up the dish and let drive.

The cook saw what was coming and ducked just in time, but the stew went all over the cabin floor. The "doctor" tried to bolt, but Pringle—backed up for once by the rest of us, for we were all pretty wild over the spoiling of our supper—made him go down on his hands and knees and clean up the mess there and then, and finished up by throwing him out of the cabin and booting him along the deck.

It was a good thing that in those days we did not see what went on inside the galley, for I am quite sure that if we had done so we should never have relished anything that came out of it. Even the men complained, but they got precious little satisfaction if they went along to the galley to threaten the cook. He used to arm himself with a dipper full of boiling water, and then ask them what they wanted, the dipper all the time trembling in his hand ready to discharge its scalding contents; and although they weren't afraid of Slushy, they were afraid of his dipper. Apart from his cooking, though, he was a universal favourite, as, like many niggers, he had plenty to say for himself and a rich fund of humour.

Pringle always carried a painter, as he preferred the bulwarks and bulkheads to be panelled and grained; some of the painters were quite artists at their work, and many shipmasters used to come on

board solely for the purpose of seeing the beautiful way in which the ship was decorated. For several voyages we had a painter who had a wooden stump in place of his right leg, and it was simply marvellous how that man managed to get round the deck. He had at one time been an able seaman, and after he lost his leg he became a painter's labourer ashore. He soon mastered his new trade and became a skilled workman, and his love of the sea made him jump at the job of painter on board the "Guildford."

He had a yarn about the way he lost his leg, which ran as follows :

Coming aboard his ship late one evening when he was more than half-seas over, he got into his bunk with nothing but his shirt on, it being in India and the weather being hot. He was the proud possessor of a revolver, which, since fire-arms were not allowed to be carried by members of the crew, he had hidden under his mattress. While lying in his bunk he was carrying on a drunken sort of conversation with the other men, which happened to turn on the mosquitoes, which as usual were buzzing about the forecabin in swarms.

Presently, as he was lying with his legs drawn up, he saw a mosquito settle on his knee, whereupon he pulled out the revolver from underneath him, and said : " You watch me fix that blinkin' mosquito ! " They only laughed at him, thinking no doubt that he was fooling with an unloaded revolver ; but he fired, and, whether he shot the mosquito or not, he smashed his kneecap to such an extent that he had to have his leg amputated, and was known ever after as " the man who shot the mosquito " !

I have no doubt said enough to show that Pringle's manners were not, to say the least, polished. When we arrived at Malta one voyage, he was very busy in the fore cabin writing to his owners when the



steward interrupted him to tell him that a gentleman wished to see him.

"Show him in," growled Pringle.

His visitor entered and said "Good morning," and without troubling to look up Pringle grunted :

"Good morning. Take a sanguinary chair !"

The gentleman, not being accustomed to such manners, exclaimed :

"Excuse me, captain, but you do not seem to know who I am. I am your agent !"

"Oh, you are, are you ?" replied Pringle, going on with his writing. "That's all right ! Take *two* ruddy chairs !" Which so amused the agent, that he laughed and took the incident in good part.

I had begun to have my misgivings as to the wisdom of the step I was taking ; however, I could hardly draw back at this stage, so next day I signed on, as did the rest of the crew, and the following morning we proceeded to sea.

The captain was up on the bridge with the pilot, and he was cursing the pilot, the tugboat, and the waterman with a voice that could be heard half a mile away. When one of the crew was slow in putting a fender over the side between the ship and the dock gates, the skipper's language was a revelation, for he swore for a couple of minutes on end without once repeating himself !

Seeing what kind of behaviour the skipper wanted from his officers, and believing in the advice, "When in Rome do as Rome does," I started to take a leaf out of the captain's book as regarded language, and rather to my surprise found the men took it just as quietly from me as they did from the skipper, whereupon, being still—please remember—very young, I began to fancy myself as a "bucko." Of course in those days every steamship sailor had been in sail for many years, and had got so accus-

tomed to hard words, hard treatment, and rigid discipline that it was but seldom that a man would turn round and raise any objection to whatever he was told to do, or to the manner in which he was addressed. Moreover, as I always carried a set of boxing-gloves, which the men could see hanging in my cabin, they jumped to the conclusion that I was a regular fighting man, and for my part I fear I gloried in the reputation and really thought it was true.

As soon as the ship was in Barry Roads and the mooring-ropes stowed away and hatches battened down watches were set, but I, being boatswain, was, of course, on duty all day. The ship was covered with about two inches of coal dust, and the first job was to wash her down, which I had to do with the three men who were available out of the watch. I took the hose and the men their brooms and mops, and we soon had her washed down fore-and-aft, so that I could get an idea of what she would look like when she was free of the dirt left behind after loading a coal cargo.

She was built on ugly lines but to the highest specifications for a cargo boat, which were equal, I should think, to those for a first-class liner in these days. All the ports along the side, and in the forecastle as well, together with the name, were of brass, and were kept highly polished. The main rail was of teak, and altogether the ship was beautifully finished off. The cabin accommodation was aft, and was on the old sailing-ship plan of having two cabins, both about ten feet by fifteen, with the captain's room and bathroom, on the starboard side, and the first and second officers' and the steward's cabins on the port side.

We were bound for Bombay, and the crew and officers soon settled down to the routine of what

was perhaps one of the hardest-worked steamers afloat. By the time we got to Port Said the deck was yachtlike in its cleanliness, the planking as white and glistening as holystone and caustic soda would make them, and as we passed through the Canal we could see the crews of other steamers gazing in admiration at the immaculate appearance we presented.

In those days every steamer carried square sail. A steamer with three masts was generally barquerigged, if with four she was square-rigged on three ; two-masted steamers were either brig- or brigantine-rigged. In our case we were brigantine-rigged with double topsails, but no topgallant sails ; whenever the sails could draw, no matter how light the wind, there was " merry hell " from the skipper if everything was not set, and when it came on to blow we had to hang on to every stitch just as did the hard-driven sailing ships. Going into port the sails had to be harbour stowed, pipeclayed covers with black gaskets put over them, and the yards squared by lifts and braces. When we passed through the Canal, of course the yards had to be braced up, and with pipeclayed awning right fore-and-aft the ship, we were able to show other ships that, although ours was such an ugly brute as regarded lines, we could give points in some respects to better-looking vessels.

Port Said, in those days, was a comparatively small place confined to one side of the harbour. It had the reputation—and it deserved it—of being the most immoral place in the world, and many a seaman had been enticed into a disorderly house and murdered—or at any rate never heard of again.

We had the remarkable experience of being moored alongside a Russian steamer conveying prisoners to Siberia. When we went alongside her

we wondered why there were armed sentries all over the deck, and through the portholes, which were obliged to be kept open, we saw that the 'tween decks were crowded with men who were chained to the deck. The smell coming through the portholes was horrible. It showed what a state of misery and filth the poor wretches must have been in. We heard afterwards that they were treated worse than dumb beasts ; that they died in shoals, and were thrown overboard almost before the breath left their bodies. Poor devils, death must have been a relief to them, for they had only forced labour to look forward to for the rest of their lives ; while as for those in charge of them, every one that died simply meant one less to look after. We were all glad when we moved into the Canal, and only the haunting memory of them remained.

The Canal at that time was very narrow, with wider spaces, called stations, every five miles. Electric lighting on board ship was not yet general, therefore there was no navigation of the Canal after sundown, every ship having to tie up in the station that was nearest at the time. Consequently, although the Canal is only eighty miles long, it took a ship two days to navigate it. It was necessary to go dead slow, and as our ship was a brute to steer we would very often ricochet from one bank to the other, causing much dismay on the part of the Dago pilot and a flood of bad language from Pringle to the helmsman.

## CHAPTER VI

### FURTHER EXPERIENCES IN THE "GUILDFORD"

**W**E had a fair passage through the Red Sea, but as soon as we entered the Indian Ocean we met the full force of the south-west monsoon. Midway across we sighted a dismasted Indian dhow, crammed with natives, who were waving white cloths as if they wished to be taken off. Pringle ordered the lifeboat to be got away, and I proceeded to take charge. It was of course a mighty dangerous job to lower a boat in the heavy sea that was running at the time, and volunteers were called for. To my amazement I found that five out of the six volunteers were firemen, the sailors having apparently funked the job, though, as a matter of fact, in those days most ship's firemen had seen service as seamen in their time.

We pulled away towards the dhow, which was lying in the trough of the sea and rolling heavily. Seeing that it was impossible to get alongside, I signalled to the natives to jump into the water and we would pick them up. Only two of them had the nerve to do so, though we were not more than a hundred feet from the dhow. We took them safely on board, and as no more out of the hundred or so that there seemed to be in the dhow showed any sign of taking the jump, I decided to return to the ship, which by that time was a good half-mile away to leeward. The sea was running very high, and the boat was shipping considerable quantities



THE "GUILDFORD" OR "BRACADAILE" (SISTER SHIPS)





of water, and it gave me rather a sinking feeling inside to see our floating home so far away. However, all things come to an end at last, and in due time we got alongside, only to be greeted with a volley of curses from Pringle because we had been such an adjectived long time about it! I lost my rag at this, and let him have as good as he gave, not omitting to rub it into him that while he was safe and comfortable on board we poor devils had been risking our lives at his command.

When this was going on the two natives we had brought back with us told an Arab fireman we had who was able to speak English that the reason the others would not leave the dhow was that they had sixty thousand rupees on board, and wanted to be towed into port. Of course, it was out of the question to undertake towage in such a gale of wind, and with great difficulty we hooked on the boatfalls and were hoisted on deck, when we didn't forget to tell the sailors who had skulked exactly what we thought about them. Pringle was so interested in hearing all we had to say to those sailors that by the time I joined him on the bridge he had forgotten all about his little dust-up with me.

We arrived at Bombay, where we discharged our cargo of coal and loaded rice and grain for home. Nothing of any importance occurred during the passage, and after unloading our cargo at Dunkirk we went over to Middlesbrough to take on board railway iron for Karachi.

The old man, as his custom was, discharged everybody, engineers and all, immediately we got to a home port, but he told me that he was ruddy well not going to let me go. He boasted that he never carried an officer two voyages, and this applied also to the engineers, whom Pringle, being an old

sailing-ship man, liked about as well as the devil does holy water.

Pringle was paid by the owners to victual the ship, and he used to make a considerable profit on the transaction. The food, therefore, was never very good ; but to me, after my hard life in sail, it seemed quite sumptuous. Not so, however, to the engineers, who had never been in anything but steamers and were used to good living. I remember the second engineer bringing along the dish of meat that they had for their dinner to the captain and asking him whether that was the kind of food the owners meant them to have. He got the usual sort of reception from the skipper.

"What the hell do you mean," he bawled, "coming along with your grub like a blooming fireman? Haven't you any dignity? Haven't you any sense of your position? What's the matter with the grub, eh?"

"It's darned well not fit to eat, that's the matter with it," said the engineer.

"Not fit to eat," roared the skipper. "Not fit for swine like you to eat! Good Gad, when you are out of a job and scratching a living by repairing winches what sort of grub d'ye get then? Answer me that! *I'll* tell you! A ruddy red herring and a bit o' mouldy bread, wrapped up in a dirty, filthy rag of a red handkerchief, that's what you get! That's the sort of thing you're used to! And then you have the darned cheek to say that grub like that—*good* grub—isn't fit for you to eat! Get out of this, or there'll be trouble!"

The engineer went ; but it was hardly surprising that if Pringle did not discharge his engine-room staff they went of their own accord.

The chief engineer we shipped for the next voyage was a very decent chap called Garstin. He

was by no means a bad-looking man, but he always had a peculiar look in one eye, which I never thought much about until one day I saw him having a row with a fireman in the alleyway.

I was never far off when there was a fight in progress, so I ran along the deck to see if my services were required to see fair play. To my astonishment Garstin turned to me and said, "Here, Millett, hold my ruddy eye," at the same time whipping out a glass eye and revealing a horrid red socket! The fireman gave one look and bolted for his life to the fo'c'sle.

I forget who the first and second officers were on that voyage, but whoever they were they soon found out that ours was what is popularly known as a "hell ship." Pringle never allowed his officers to look at a chart or even to go into the chart-room, and unless we were in close proximity to land he expected the officer of the watch to be chasing the men at their work round the deck, relying on the man at the wheel calling out to him if another ship or the land was sighted. How he escaped disaster in consequence of this folly I do not know. I have often known his officers, including myself, just go on the bridge at the beginning of the watch to see that the helmsman had got the right course, and never again throughout the whole of the watch. Sometimes we would even be in the hold helping to sweep it up and put up shifting boards ready for the next cargo.

The day before we reached Karachi we sighted another dismasted dhow, but this time the sea was like a millpond. As we approached we saw a dozen natives leaving her in their canoe. We stopped and took them on board; we had no interpreter, but we could understand from their

signs that they were abandoning the dhow and wanted to be taken on. Pringle ordered me and the carpenter to take the boat and see whether the dhow was worth salving. She proved to be laden with teak, and apart from being dismasted and rudderless she was in good condition. By this time the steamer had been manœuvred within a few feet of the dhow, and Pringle told me to remain on board and he would tow her into Karachi.

We got the ropes aboard, and putting on full speed away we went. I now proceeded to inspect my first command. The sleeping quarters of the ship's company were aft, and were simply a kind of bamboo compartment. Other accommodation there was none. I turned over all the linen cloths the natives had left behind to see if there was any treasure, but all I found was two rupees which someone had forgotten.

The men and I made ourselves as comfortable as we could, and took watch and watch until we arrived at Karachi, when Pringle told me I could leave the dhow and come on board. I did so, and after an hour or two I began to scratch myself. I thought I had got prickly heat, but as the irritation continued I made some researches and discovered to my horror that I was covered with lice. I was so disgusted that I jumped straight overboard in my clothes and tore off every rag I had on in the water. I climbed on board in a state of nature, but even then I didn't feel content until I had got a bucket of water with some carbolic in it and sluiced myself down.

I thought that I was going to make a few pounds out of the salvage of the dhow, but all I could ever get out of Pringle was that the ruddy thing had not brought him in a penny. I know it was a lie, but the fact remains I got nothing.

We loaded at Karachi for Hamburg, and as we went up the Elbe I said to the captain :

" Are you going to sack the second mate when you get home ? "

" What the blazes has that got to do with you ? " he retorted.

" Nothing except that if you do, and don't give me his job, I'm darned well going to leave," I said. " I'm pretty near fed up with this."

He mumbled something about, as we should say nowadays, " waiting and seeing " ; and I waited, with the result that when we got home I at last got my long-desired second mate's berth.

The new chief officer was called Erskine. He was the son of the carpenter, who, with the exception of myself, was the only man who had sailed two voyages with Pringle. Erskine was a terror. The first hint of a back answer was always enough to make him up fist and down a man, and, what is more, he could do it.

It was most amusing to see him and his father, the carpenter, together. One evening in port all hands, including myself, were at work on the fo'c'sle head taking aboard a new anchor. The carpenter didn't agree with something his son was doing, so he said :

" Jim, what the hell's the good of doing that ? "

" What the ruddy blazes do you mean by talking to me that way ? " retorted the chief officer.

" Beg pardon, sir ! " said his father. He was afraid of no man, but realized that discipline had to be maintained. When they were alone it was always " Jim " and " Dad " between them ; they were the best of chums as a rule, and, whether singly or together, they put the fear of God into the crew.

Just as we were sailing for Bombay, Pringle was transferred to the " Brookfield," and an awfully



decent-looking and well-spoken man came on board to take command. He was Captain S——, and was a man of about thirty-five ; after Pringle's rough ways I welcomed the idea of having a more gentlemanly man in command of the ship, and both Erskine and I looked forward to a peaceful time.

However, as it turned out, the voyage was barely begun before our troubles started. We were in the middle of the Bay of Biscay when a crash was heard in the engine-room and the ship stopped. The chief engineer reported that the high-pressure piston cover had carried away, and that he was not quite sure whether he could disconnect the cylinder and be able to work back to port on the low pressure. While he was endeavouring to effect repairs I saw one of the prettiest sights I have ever seen, and one, no doubt, which will never be seen again. We were lying in the trough of the sea, and it was blowing half a gale, when, coming in our direction, we sighted what looked like a sailing ship, but which proved as she came closer to be a Russian man-of-war with every stitch set.

Immediately she saw our signals that we were not under control her yards were crowded with men, and in less than a minute her sail absolutely disappeared. It was a marvellous sight, and one of the most interesting imaginable : one minute there she was under full press of sail, and the next every stitch was stowed. She slowed down her engines and asked us whether we required any assistance, but at that moment the chief engineer came up and said he thought we could steam as far as the nearest home port to effect permanent repairs ; so we hoisted the signal that assistance was not required, and within a couple of minutes the man-of-war had crowded on sail again and left us.

We got back to Falmouth safely under reduced speed, and when the owners got our report they arranged with Palmer's to supply us with a new piston cover, which was sent down and fitted within three days after our arrival at Falmouth.

We were ready to leave at eleven o'clock at night, and proceeded out of the inner harbour under the charge of the pilot. To our surprise Erskine and I noticed that the new skipper was half-seas over. However, we did not think anything of it, thinking that he had perhaps been saying good-bye rather too often to people he had met on shore that evening.

When we were clear of the inner harbour I was aft superintending the coiling and stowing away of the mooring-ropes, when Erskine came along the deck and said :

" See what that blank swine has done to me ! "

I turned my signal lamp on to him, and saw that his nose was bleeding and his lip cut.

" Who did that ? " I asked.

" The skipper," he replied. " He called me up on to the bridge, and while I was on the ladder he went for me and knocked me flying with a smack on the nose."

" What did you do ? " I said.

" What did I do ? " he repeated. " I was up that ladder like a flash of lightning, and I lambasted him all over the bridge and knocked seven bells out of him. And now he wants you ! "

Off I went, and on my way met the pilot, shaking with fear, disappearing over the side. He said he wouldn't stay on such a ship a minute longer, and as we were just at the outer entrance of the harbour his services were really not needed.

I went up on to the bridge and found the skipper very full of the way his chief officer had assaulted him. He said he had sent him to his room until

the ship reached Port Said, when he intended to have him court-martialled for striking his superior officer ! I was able to indulge in a grin under cover of the darkness, and before I was called upon to reply, as luck would have it, the chief engineer came up on to the bridge and said that something was wrong and we should have to anchor. I went forward to attend to the anchor, and when I returned I looked into the chart-room and saw the captain lying in the full glare of the lamp in a drunken sleep. There was blood all over his face and his overcoat from the hammering the chief officer had given him, and he looked such a disgusting sight that I went inside and turned out the light rather than let the men see him in such a state.

Meanwhile the chief officer had turned in and gone to sleep, and I was left in charge. In a couple of hours' time the chief engineer reported that everything was all right, so I went into the chart-room and tried to rouse the skipper out. Shake him as I would he would not budge, and at last I gave it up in despair. The chief engineer, who had been watching all this, said : " Go up and take her out yourself, old man ; don't let us be seen here in daylight ! " I sent the bos'n forward to heave up the anchor, and then, ringing the telegraph for full speed, headed her out to sea. As I had never set a course before except at a navigation school, I was a little bit nervous about the course we should steer for Cape Finisterre ; however, I did my best, and felt happy in the thought that we could not go wrong for a couple of days.

By this time it was daylight, so I went down to the chart-room again, and (as gentle means would not wake the captain up) I literally shook him into sensibility. He was a filthy object, and I advised him to go aft to his quarters and clean himself up,

before anyone saw him. He went, and in an hour as he had not returned I went in search of him and found him washed, undressed, and fast asleep in his cabin. Having been brought up to regard captains almost in the light of deities, I did not like to rouse him out again ; but, as I had now been on duty for twenty-four hours without a break, I went along to see the chief officer and asked him to take charge.

" See you damned first ! " he replied cheerfully. "*I'm quite happy, thanks !*"

I went back on to the bridge again, and as we were now in the open sea with nothing in the way, I put the bos'n in charge and lay down in the chart-room for a much-needed sleep.

I was called two hours later, and at last succeeded in rousing the captain. I told him—much to his surprise—that we were well out to sea. He told me to go below and have a sleep, and at the end of four hours he called me and told me that he and I would keep watch and watch until we got to Port Said. We did so for two days, during which the chief officer was having a high old time lazing in his cabin, and jeering at me when I cursed the whole business. The captain himself was so sick of it that he told me to tell the chief officer he would be forgiven if he apologized. On my informing Erskine of this, all he said was : " See him damned first ! He started the row."

I argued the point with him, but it was no good. However, at last I persuaded him that he would do no harm to his principles by saying that he was sorry it had happened, since he had every reason to be sorry on his own account, as it would do no good to his prospects.

" All right," he said unwillingly ; " you can tell the old swine I am sorry, then."

I took this message to the captain, and he looked tremendously relieved.

"Very well," he said; "tell him to start work again and I will try to forget all about it."

Erskine turned to, and all was peace.

Nothing else happened during the voyage, except the usual occasional hammering of the firemen and others by the chief officer, and threats on my part to do the same. When we got to Bombay we didn't see the skipper for a whole week: he was having a great time with his feminine acquaintances ashore. Just before we finished loading he came aboard looking a perfect wreck, and from that time on he was never quite sober.

The captain never interfered with the work of the ship, and during the passage out and in Bombay, Erskine and I had put in a lot of hard work, so that before we left we had the ship looking as clean as a yacht. We continued to work on Bully Pringle's plan that the chief officer should look after the fore part of the ship from funnel forward and the second officer from the funnel aft, and I remember an old-style skipper coming aboard and admiring the after deck. As we had finished loading and had all the awnings spread fore-and-aft, pipeclayed hatch covers on and pipeclayed covers over the winches, and the decks well holystoned, the after-deck certainly looked a picture. The old-style skipper took a look round, and, turning to me, said: "Here, mister, I want to see how you keep your berth." I wondered why; however I took him along. Here again there was no fault to find, for the hard training I had received in sailing ships had taught me to be extremely neat as regarded my berth.

"Well, young man," he said, "I am old enough to be your grandfather, and let me tell you that whenever I go aboard a ship and find an officer's



berth kept as yours is kept, I know that he is looking after his work and will keep his ship in good order too." I have often thought about his words since, and I realize the older I grow how true his observation is, whether applied to house, ship, or office.

From Bombay we sailed for Dunkirk. All the way across the Indian Ocean we scarcely saw the captain, and it was more by good luck than good management that we arrived safely at Perim, where we were to coal. The day after we left that place the skipper was lying half-screwed as usual, and I was asleep in my watch below, when Erskine came and roused me with a white face.

"Good God, Millett," he said, "I have done it now!"

"Done what?" I asked.

"Let the blessed chronometers run down!"

It appears he had forgotten to wind them when we were coaling at Perim, and as they were only forty-eight hour chronometers they had run down in consequence. I thought for a bit, and remembering that the captain had a chronometer of his own in his cabin, I went down and found him in a drunken stupor. I then arranged that the steward should wave a handkerchief out of the deck porthole at a certain time by the captain's chronometer. I set the two on the bridge to that time, and when Erskine received the signal from the steward and passed it on to me I gave both chronometers a sharp circular motion and set them going. It could not have done them any good, and of course the rate was altered, but they were so close that I told Erskine to say to the captain that they ran down just when he was going to wind them, and on his hurriedly winding them up there was, of course, a difference in the rate that we had been accustomed



to allow. Whether the skipper believed the yarn or not I can't say. At any rate the explanation was accepted, and in future sights were taken by means of the captain's own chronometer.

## CHAPTER VII

### I GO TO AUSTRALIA. BULLY PRINGLE AGAIN

**W**E eventually got to Dunkirk, where we discharged our cargo, and proceeded to West Hartlepool to load. The captain told Erskine that he did not require him another voyage, whereupon the latter went to the firm and reported how constantly the captain had been drunk during the voyage. I was summoned as a witness, but, for some reason best known to themselves, the owners decided to give the captain another chance. I heard afterwards that he drank more than ever on his next voyage, and, as a matter of fact, was locked up for being drunk and disorderly in Genoa, so, on this coming to the owners' ears, they dismissed him from their service on his return home. Poor Erskine, however, had to look for another job, I meanwhile being left in charge of the ship.

It was bitterly cold weather, and I caught a chill which settled on my lungs. I became seriously ill and had to go home. I could not shake the chill off, and the doctors, fearing I might be going into consumption, ordered me off to a warmer climate to escape the bitter winter that we were then experiencing. My brother was in the Indian Civil Service in the Bombay Presidency, and so I decided that the only way that I could afford to go to a warmer climate was to live on him. My owners got a friend of theirs to give me a passage to Bombay in one of their steamers, and I left England, and, although on

arrival at Bombay I was not well, I certainly had improved in health. I stayed with my brother for four months, but unfortunately my illness turned to asthma, and at times the attacks were so bad that for a week at a time I was unable to lie down. The doctor advised my returning home, as summer was then approaching in England, and I got a cheap passage in a cargo boat to Trieste, eventually arriving home in May. The asthma not being any better, I was in the doctors' hands the whole summer trying various remedies, but without result, and, winter approaching again, they ordered me off, either to the Cape or Australia, as a last hope of saving my life.

I was given a passage to Sydney, New South Wales, in a steamer called the "Bayley." I joined her on November 5, 1888, in a terrific snow-storm, which brought on the most severe attack of asthma that I had ever had. I was so bad that, when sitting up in my berth in the cabin, I heard the captain say to the owner (who had come aboard to wish him good-bye): "Why on earth did you allow that young fellow to come with us? He will be dead before we get to Las Palmas"; and I must say that I did not care much if I did die, so the remark had no effect on me.

When I was packing up my things at home, my dear mother (who was always buying me stuff that she saw advertised to cure asthma) packed me, against my will, a bottle of patent medicine called "Doctor Hare's Cure for Asthma," and my first evening aboard the ship, being so ill, I decided to try this new remedy. The directions stated, "A tablespoonful to be taken three times a day, with a cold bath in the morning." I took one dose and immediately felt the benefit, and after a fairly good night I awakened feeling much better. The ship

was then off Dover, and I wondered whether I should carry out the further instructions on the bottle and take a cold bath. I decided it was a case of "kill or cure," so I asked the steward whether I could have a cold salt-water bath, a thing which I had never taken previously, except in hot weather. The steward calmly said, "Do you want to kill yourself?" to which I replied, "I do not care, but I want a cold bath." He prepared it, and although it was bitterly cold weather I plunged into it, with the result that I thought I was going to give up the ghost! I scrambled out, dried myself thoroughly, and, to cut a long story short, within a week after finishing the bottle of medicine, and taking cold baths every morning, the phlegm on my lungs all came away, and I was practically free from asthma. By the time we got to Australia I had no trace of it, and have never had it since.

We had an uneventful voyage out, and on arrival at Sydney I determined to stay out there for a time, in order to make sure that my health was quite recovered. I applied to Howard Smith & Co. for a third mate's job in one of their coasting steamers, and was accepted and appointed to their S.S. "Gambier," a small double-funnel passenger boat, formerly owned by Alfred Holt & Co. I remained in her for two months, when for some reason or another I was shifted to the S.S. "Era," a collier employed between Newcastle and Melbourne, and considered by all the officers the most desirable ship of the fleet, as the round trip took less than a fortnight, giving us always a free Sunday in Melbourne. I soon got to know people. My greatest friends were a Congregational minister and his three very pretty daughters. I was in love with all three; but that is thirty-five years ago, and I suppose now they are all grandmothers, although I

can still visualize them as the sweet, pretty little things that they were when I was in love with them.

I carried on my duties as third mate in the same manner that I had been accustomed to under Bully Pringle, but the Australian sailors and officers were not accustomed to "hard case" methods, and although I never had any man turn on me, yet I became well known in the company for a "driver." To my surprise, however, although I was junior third officer of the company, four months after I joined I was offered the second officer's berth in my old ship, the "Gambier." I joined her and found that she had a new captain in the shape of a young bachelor, who, although he knew his work, was no disciplinarian, in that he made love openly to all the pretty girls amongst the many passengers we carried between Melbourne and Sydney. He allowed those who were in any way good-looking to do just as they liked, and on the bridge sometimes he was to be seen sitting on one side surrounded by three or four girls, while I (who was supposed to be keeping watch) had three or four on the other side. He and I being the two youngest, as the third mate and chief officer were elderly men, had some lovely times, but this is a story that I am not going to tell!

After I had been a few months second mate, one voyage when we returned to Melbourne we found that the secretary of our union had decided that we should all strike for higher wages. He came aboard our ship to induce us to join in the strike, and assured us that when he gave the signal every officer of every ship engaged in the coasting trade of Australia would strike immediately the ship was in port. I did not care whether I struck or not, as I had resolved to go home to England as soon as I could get a ship, so I willingly threw in my lot with

the others and agreed to strike. Two days later the signal was given, and all the officers left their ships, but, as I was doing so, the marine superintendent of the company begged me to reconsider my decision, since he had already marked me for the chief officer's berth in the S.S. "Gambier." I was gratified at his thinking so highly of me, but pointed out to him that I was only on the coast temporarily, and so thought that as other officers, who had their homes in Australia, were striking, I could not play them a dirty trick by not joining them. He was very persistent, and even went so far as to promise me command within a couple of years from that time, which gave me furiously to think, as, after all, I was only twenty-three years of age ; but I set my face against the temptation and left the ship. All the officers thought they were little tin heroes, and accepted the assurance of the secretary blindly that the whole of the coasting trade would be hung up because there would be no officers to run the ships. As a matter of fact, the coasting trade was not hung up, for neither the secretary nor the officers had realized that there were hundreds of sailing-ship officers out of jobs, or in shore jobs, who were only too glad to have the opportunity of going into coasting steamers ; with the result that within a week every steamer was running, fully manned by blackleg officers, and all of us out of jobs.

I had saved up some money, with which I proceeded to have a mighty good time with my girl friends ; but at the end of two months found that I had better get to England or else I should be penniless. One of the coasting steamers, named the "Wastwater," was loading wool for England, so I applied for and was given the third mate's job. The skipper, an old man, was a splendid navigator. His knowledge of the stars was very extensive, and



all I know about astronomy I learned from him on the passage to England.

We arrived home in due course, and, after a holiday, I applied to my old company, and they appointed me second officer of a new ship that was just being built for them, named the S.S. "Pembroke," in which I made a voyage to Calcutta, during which nothing of any interest occurred. When I got home again I found that Bully Pringle had applied to the company for me as his chief officer in the S.S. "Brookfield." I did not care much about going with him again, but realizing that, with all his little peculiarities, he was a splendid man for a young fellow to receive his training from, I accepted the position and joined the ship at Harwich. The second mate was a young fellow named George Herbert. This was in 1890, thirty-four years ago, and I am pleased to say that Herbert and I have remained the closest of friends during all those long years. He was half an inch or an inch less in height than myself and was of sturdy build, and, like all officers who made more than one voyage with Bully Pringle, had no fear and was always ready for a scrap.

We went to bunker at Shields prior to proceeding in ballast to New York for orders. Owing to depression in trade, Shields was overstocked with sailors and firemen, so I had a choice of hundreds of men applying to ship. I engaged all young fellows who were sailing-ship men. Two of them, I remember, had their certificates, and when we sailed from Shields, we had about as good a crowd of seamen as any steamer ever had.

Herbert was quite ready to co-operate with me in driving the men, and we soon had Pringle very pleased with the way we got the work done.

As usual, I carried a pair of boxing-gloves, and

while Herbert and I sailed together in fine weather we were constantly slogging away at each other whenever we had a chance. We were both (as I have already said) about the same size and so were a good match. When we got tired of hammering each other, which we did most unmercifully, we used to invite the engineers to take us on, but there was "nothing doing." In port, sometimes, we used to have admiring audiences in the evening watching us, both from the shore and from other ships. I remember at Galveston the captain brought some of his friends (masters of other steamers in the port) on board, and as they came over the gangway they saw Herbert and me laying into each other for all we were worth. Of course we knocked off, and one of the captains told us that his officers could knock seven bells out of us. Herbert asked me to find out which ship he was master of, so I went in and asked him and he told me it was the "Endeavour." Herbert immediately put the boxing-gloves under his arm and went along the wharf and got aboard the ship, asking the watchman where he could find the chief officer. He was told that all the officers were in the chart-room playing cards, so he went along the bridge and knocked at the chart-room door. Somebody yelled out, "Come in," and on entering Herbert found three officers inside. He informed them that their skipper had told him and myself that they could knock seven bells out of us, and that he had come round to invite them to do it ! He told me afterwards that he never saw officers more taken aback in their lives, and they hastily proceeded to tell him that they were not fighting men. He came back extremely disappointed ; and when he told me about it, I at once told the steward that I wanted to see our skipper, and on his coming out I told him what had occurred. Of course he

appreciated the joke and went in and pulled the leg of the captain of the " Endeavour " ; and I heard afterwards that he took it out of his officers to such an extent that they were sick to death of hearing how they had been challenged and were not men enough to take it on !

This continual scrapping with the gloves between Herbert and myself not only kept us in good condition but gave all the men the impression that we were able to use our fists to a far greater extent than we really were ; the consequence being that, during the whole time we were together, we never had much trouble in handling either the seamen or the firemen.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TO NEW ORLEANS AND PHILADELPHIA IN THE S.S. "BROOKFIELD"

**I**T was the month of January when we left Shields. We went north about, through the Pentland Firth, and bitter cold it was. The ship was flying light, having only 400 tons of ballast in addition to her ordinary water ballast, so as soon as we got out into the Atlantic we had an uncomfortable time with the heavy rolling of the ship. In fact, she did not roll, she jerked. Two days after our departure we ran into a heavy south-west gale, and the ship would not lie up to the wind at all, but fell off practically into the trough of the sea. This did not improve Pringle's temper, and, something having gone wrong, he came up on the lower bridge and began cursing at me. I cursed back at him, and as the gale prevented our hearing each other, he made a sign that he wanted me in the chart-room. He opened the door, and as he was going in, the ship gave an extra violent jerk. I was holding on to the bridge ladder, and I heard a fearful crash inside the chart-room. I flew to look in, and found that he had been thrown clean across the room, bursting the door on the other side; his legs were hanging over the ship's side and blood was streaming from his head. As the ship rolled him towards me, I raced across and caught him before she rolled back again, otherwise he would have gone overboard and sunk like a stone. I hauled him on deck and blew my whistle,

and some men coming along we carried him aft to his cabin, where, on examination, I thought he was dead, for his head was split clean open from the middle of his forehead right to the back of his head. I had the second mate called, and sent him on the bridge to take charge while I proceeded to doctor up the captain. I cut all the hair round the wound, but as the ship was jerking so much I was unable to do anything but strap the two parts of the scalp together. I gave him some brandy, and he recovered consciousness, but, of course, was so stunned that all I could do was to leave him to recover, if he was going to. I then went on deck and told Herbert all that had occurred, and although we were, in a measure, sorry for the captain, we could not help rubbing our hands that we were free from all control and were masters of the situation. The gale was increasing and the ship was making no headway, so that there was a spice of danger in the position.

I had often pictured myself in charge of an unmanageable ship during a gale of wind, and I had reasoned out that if I came astern slow on my engines, and set the fore-staysail, the ship ought to ride closer to the wind. Now that I had the opportunity of putting my idea into practice I immediately did so, with the happiest results, as the ship certainly came up with her stern closer to the wind, and made considerably better weather of it than she was doing previously. When one thinks of it, it naturally follows that a propeller working astern must act as a brake to the ship; and with the great aid of the fore-staysail blowing her bow off, a steamer must lie closer to the wind under small power of the engines than she would if she was being driven head on to the gale, and I am of opinion that the same manœuvre could be







executed with a loaded ship, although I never had occasion to try it. Of course she still jerked, and about five o'clock in the evening we heard a most unearthly sound going on in the after 'tween decks. I knew at once that the spare propeller blades must have broken loose from their lashings around the mainmast, so I called all hands, sent the second mate on the bridge, and going down to the 'tween decks, I found by the light of hurricane lamps three spare blades jerking from side to side. These blades weighed close on a ton each, and to see three of them charging around the 'tween decks in a howling gale of wind, with only the poor light of three or four hurricane lamps to help us to secure them, was enough to daunt the bravest heart. Fortunately we had a splendid crowd of men, but the old carpenter soon chucked it up when a propeller blade charged down upon him and missed him by an inch. How we secured those blades was a marvel, as all we could do was (at the risk of our lives) to watch for the blade charging down, and then slip—or endeavour to slip—a chain round it to hold it long enough to get further lashings round it. I breathed a sigh of relief when we had finally secured the three blades, and none of us, marvellous to say, had been hurt. Fortunately the 'tween-deck hatches had high coamings, otherwise the blades would have shot down into the lower hold and either gone through the tank tops or else the side of the ship. If that had occurred I do not think I should be here writing this now.

During that night the gale moderated, and next morning I set the ship on her course again. After breakfast I went in to see the captain and washed his wound, but on his saying that he would try to get out on deck, I persuaded him to stay in bed, and frightened him into doing so by talking of his

getting erysipelas if he caught cold in his wound. When I saw Herbert I told him what I had said to the skipper, and told him to keep the fiction up, as it was far more comfortable being on our own than having him bullying us round. Between us, therefore, we effectually frightened the skipper into keeping below, and it was not until we made the lightship off New York that he came on deck. How we made the lightship is a constant surprise to Herbert and myself, as often for days together we were unable to get a sight; but we made it nevertheless, and received orders to proceed to New Orleans, where we eventually arrived without further incident.

We proceeded to load cotton, and during the time we were there Herbert and I made the men get through so much work that the ship was regarded as the cleanest and best-kept ship in the harbour. She certainly looked a picture with her yards squared and canvas covers on, and everything round her deck looking immaculate.

We had two little bits of excitement while we were in New Orleans—one caused by the carpenter going “berserk” because one of the stevedore men kicked his cat! The carpenter (who was the same man who was in the S.S. “Guildford” under Bully Pringle, a great, rawboned north countryman, about sixty years of age) absolutely went mad with rage, and threatened to slaughter not only the man who kicked the cat but every other man connected with him; and, strange to say, there was not a man there who would take him on!

Another incident occurred between two of the stevedore’s own men. When I came on the scene there had evidently been words between the two, who were working the bales of cotton on the wharf, for as I approached them one man made a dash at

the other with his cotton hook, which, if he had got him, would have ripped him right down. The other man dodged and ran for all he was worth, with the man with the cotton hook running after him; but the man who was being chased caught up a paving-stone from a big heap he was passing and, turning round, flung it at the man who was chasing him, catching him fair and square on the forehead and bowling him over like a rabbit. A crowd collected, and as usual there were partisans on each side. I never shall forget the man who threw the stone turning round and saying, "I do not fight with cotton hooks, but I will take on any man with my fists who has a word to say about the matter"; and he looked as if he could do it too. The men apparently thought the same, for there were no takers. The man who had been floored by the paving-stone was carried away, and what was the end of him I do not know, except that he lived.

Another incident that might have led to trouble was that Herbert had words with a great big buck nigger, driver of a trolley containing cotton. The first I knew of it was when one of the stevedore's men came running up to me and said: "Here, mister, take your club ashore at once; your second mate is in trouble." I had no club, but I jumped on shore and found that the nigger was just on the point of going for the second mate. He looked big enough to eat both of us, but on my running towards him, asking him what the Hades he thought he was going to do, to my surprise and pleasure he turned and walked to his cart (very hastily, I may say) and drove away.

We sailed for the Continent, and, as far as I can remember, arrived there without incident. We then proceeded to Cardiff to load coal for Alexandria.

Herbert and I remained in the ship and made the trip, again an uneventful one, out to Alexandria, where we discharged the coal and received orders to proceed to Seriphos in the Grecian Archipelago to load iron ore for Philadelphia. On arrival at the island we found that a ship was loaded by lying right sheer alongside the cliff, there being no jetty at all to fend her off. Wires were run down from the top of the cliff to the ship's deck, and buckets were let down the wire with the iron ore. The bay was sheltered, but if a breeze sprung up in the wrong direction one had immediately to stop loading and heave the ship off clear of the cliff. The ore being heavy, we were only four or five days loading, and we proceeded to move out of the bay. I was on the forecastle head heaving the anchor up. Unfortunately the carpenter was not attending to his work, and when I blew the whistle for him to 'vast heaving he did not turn the steam off quick enough, with the result that the shackle of the anchor jammed in the hawse-pipe. I yelled out to the captain to stop his engines, as the shackle was jammed, but he refused to do so and came forward to see what was the matter. He proceeded to give orders, and as this was contrary to the old sailing-ship rule that a captain never came forward to give orders when the mate was in charge, I at once said :

"It does not want two good men up here, so I'm off."

"You can ruddy well go up on the bridge then," he replied.

I went, and from that point saw what the captain was doing. He hooked on the cat-fall to the anchor and proceeded to heave away until the anchor was as high as the jammed shackle would allow it to come, and then, to my surprise, he yelled

out, "Let go of the cat-fall," the result being that the anchor came down with a crash against the ship's bow. This went on for half a dozen times when I saw great excitement, and the captain and everybody else peering over the bow, so I left the bridge and went forward to see what was the matter. I found that the fluke of the anchor had knocked a hole clean through the bow, luckily just above water. I could not help giving the captain a congratulatory smile which made him squirm with rage, and all he could say was, "Heave the anchor up as far as it will go and secure it, and stop up that hole in the bow." Then he went along to the bridge and took charge. Of course Herbert and I enjoyed the discomfiture of the captain exceedingly, and he, knowing what a fool he had made of himself before everybody, did not dare to say a word, but sulked down in his cabin. It took the second and third engineer six hours to cut the shackle with a cold chisel and hammer, and the language that they used was not fit for an innocent child to hear! We plugged up the hole in the bow and had no trouble with it day after day, as the sea was like a mill-pond, but the captain decided to put into Gibraltar to have a plate placed over it.

We went alongside Government Mole, and by filling the after ballast tanks got the bow well out of water, and the fitters soon got to work in drilling holes to fit a plate. Our engineers fraternized with the Government Dockyard engineers, and a very amusing incident happened in consequence. The chief engineer came along to Herbert and myself roaring with laughter, and said he had a huge joke up against us, so we asked him what it was, and it appeared that one of the Government artificers remarked to him, "I see that you have apprentices on board this ship." The chief engineer asked him



what he meant, to which he replied, " Why, those two blinking boys walking round in uniform there " ; and he would not credit it when the chief engineer said, " They are our first and second officers ! " He thought it was a huge joke, but Herbert and I took it as a compliment, because, neither of us being able to grow a moustache, we undoubtedly looked very much younger than we were ; but after that the chief engineer never gave us any peace, and was always reminding us of the fact that we were only two blinking boys !

We sailed from Gibraltar and had a good run over to Philadelphia. During the greater part of the time the Captain never spoke to me unless he was absolutely obliged, and I could see I was in his black books, but shortly before taking the pilot he veered round and was extremely friendly. Going up the river, Herbert was on the bridge by the telegraph and I was forward getting everything ready for going alongside the wharf, when—as Herbert afterwards told me—the pilot said to Pringle, " Guess you have got a smart chief officer forward there, captain." Herbert, with great glee, told me how well the skipper had spoken of me, and jeered at my blushing, but at the same time, of course, I could not help feeling gratified at having such a good account given of myself.

We only took two days to discharge our cargo, and on the way down the river, under another pilot, Herbert, who was again on the bridge, told me afterwards that this pilot also made some good remark about me, whereupon—as something had gone wrong between the skipper and myself—he replied, " *He* smart ! I would not carry the silly swine for ballast another voyage ! " Of course Herbert told me this with even greater gusto than the laudatory remark the skipper had made about

me previously, and whenever he wanted to rile me after that, he used to remind me that I was a silly swine and would not be carried for ballast another voyage! Needless to say, Captain Pringle and I were at daggers drawn after that for some time; but he again veered round and I, knowing what kind of man he was, always blowing hot and cold, tried to forget the incident.

We went to New Orleans again and loaded cotton, and then sailed for Havre. It was the depth of winter, and we had bad weather coming across, generally from the north-east; but on going on watch at midnight one night I found the wind had veered round to the west, which pleased me so much that I resolved to make all sail. There were only four men in the watch, and therefore, according to Pringle's practice, I left the bridge, called the man down from the look out, and we set every stitch, even to the staysails and topgallantsail. The gale freshened and she was staggering along for all she was worth, and at four o'clock, when Herbert came on the bridge to relieve me, he was as pleased as I was to find us doing at least eleven knots with a following sea. I gave him the course, and after one or two remarks, was just going off the bridge when the wind chopped right back to the north-east, with the result that we were taken all aback. Being under steam, of course I soon had her before the wind again; but, unfortunately, by that time almost every sail that we had set had carried away and was being blown into ribbons, and it took all hands an hour and a half to secure them. I went aft and roused the captain and told him what had occurred; as the sails were the apple of his eye, he was speechless for a few minutes, and then he started by saying, "You call yourself a ruddy sailor!" But he got no further, for I had

been up five and a half hours, was wet through, and my clothes were freezing on me, so I felt in no mood to take his remarks. The language that poured out of my mouth shocked even him. All he could say was, "Get out of my ruddy berth at once," and I went and turned in. He never spoke to me again, and gave all his instructions through Herbert until we got to Havre, when we had to make our indent for the stores for the next voyage to send home. He told Herbert to instruct me to put down for what amounted to almost a new suit of sails, with the result that the owners wrote back and said that they had decided to follow the practice of other shipowners and do away with the yards. When Pringle received that letter he was absolutely dancing mad, and told Herbert that he had no use at all for me, that I was no ruddy sailor, and that I could clear out immediately the ship arrived at a home port. As I had resolved to do this I did not care, and on arrival at Cardiff we received orders to lay the ship up, as freights were so bad that in the end she was sold to James Knott & Company.

Meanwhile, Herbert and I were transferred as first and second officers to the S.S. "Weybridge" under a little Welshman, who is now dead. We had heard of him, but what we had heard certainly did not come up to what we found out about him, for I think he was the meanest-spirited and meanest-natured man that I have ever come across, and, as far as we could see in the two voyages we made with him, had no redeeming traits. He was a thorough cur, and the only idea he had of maintaining his dignity as master was saying, "Indeed to goodness, you must remember that I am the captain of this ship." In bad weather, and even in narrow waters, he was such a coward that one

could almost say that he was brave with it. I have been on the bridge making the Lizard lights in a howling gale of wind, with snow and sleet storms, and he has been so scared that he has actually turned into his bunk and tried to sleep away his trouble, trusting the ship entirely to Providence and to Herbert and myself. We used to despise him for doing this, but, at the same time, marvelled at the man's nerve in being able to turn in, when we and all other men in charge of the ship would have thought it necessary to be on the bridge the whole time.

We sailed on Christmas Eve at 10 o'clock, and as soon as we were clear of Lundy Island we felt the full force of the south-westerly gale. The captain, of course, went and turned in, but the second mate and myself had to stand our watches. When the day dawned on Christmas Day the scene was far from making one feel cheerful, as the ship was burying herself in the seas, and everything was grey and wet and miserable. The Cornish coast showed indistinctly, and our thoughts naturally turned to the festivities going on at home, while we poor devils were having about as bad a time as people could have. The Christmas dinner consisted of beef and pudding, both so badly cooked, owing to the gale, that we couldn't eat them. Altogether, there was not a soul on the ship who did not feel that it was the worst Christmas they had ever spent, and as for the firemen and sailors (suffering as they were from the after effects of drinking) they must have felt wretched!

Out in Buenos Ayres the skipper claimed that a man had come into his cabin during the night and stolen money, so he actually gave orders that the lazarette hatch was to be left open during the night hours. As it was situated outside his cabin door, it was a

constant surprise to us that someone did not fall down and break his neck. However, nobody was bagged, but it was a risky thing to do as the ship might have had to pay compensation heavily had anyone who had lawful occasion to go to the cabin door fallen down the hatch.

On the second voyage, when we arrived at Dunkirk, the owner came aboard and said that he wanted me to take him round the ship, to show him her condition. This I was only too glad to do, as Herbert and I had got her into first-class order, and after an hour's inspection the owner congratulated me on the condition of the ship, and went below to see the captain. Two hours later the owner came up again on deck, and, calling me to him, informed me that on mentioning to the captain that a master was required for their S.S. "Pembridge," he had recommended me for the position. I could therefore leave the ship next day, and, subject to his partner's consent, I should be given command of the S.S. "Pembridge." I never liked our captain, but when I found that he had recommended me for promotion I felt sorry for having thought so evilly of him, and straightway went down to the cabin and asked him to forgive me if I had given him cause for offence in the two voyages I made with him. I felt rotten at having misjudged him, and I left the ship thinking that he was really a decent chap.

I got over to London, and the next day gaily went to the office, thinking I was sure of getting command, but, on seeing the owner who had promised me the job, namely, Mr. John —, he told me that I had to go in and see Mr. Joseph —. I went in, and this is what occurred :

"What do you want?"

"Mr. John said he would give me command of



the S.S. 'Pembroke,' subject to your consent, sir."

"Oh! did he? Are you the senior chief officer of the company?"

"No, sir."

"Well, it is like your impudence to expect to get command of any of the ships before you are the senior chief officer. When you attain that position you shall have command, not before. Good morning!"

I went out of his office a very disappointed man, and, returning to Mr. John, told him what had happened, whereupon he said:

"Well, Mr. Millett, I have been thinking over what the captain of the S.S. 'Weybridge' said as regards you, and I have come to the conclusion that he recommended you so highly that he evidently wanted to get rid of you!"

I saw at once that what he said was the truth, and told him so; but the rage and hatred in my heart against the captain was greater by reason of the misplaced tenderness I had felt for him when he recommended me that command.

I now had to wait for another ship, which was presently forthcoming in the shape of the S.S. "Bracadaile," sister ship to the first steamer I served in, namely, the S.S. "Guildford." The "Bracadaile" was getting to be an old ship, and had a very unreliable steam steering-gear, which broke down almost every other day, and sometimes two or three times a day, necessitating the use of the hand gear. She was a beast to steer, and there were very few men who could hold her to her course.

I joined her at Cork, and found that the late chief officer had just been appointed to the command, and was extremely nervous about taking the position. We sailed for Cardiff and loaded



coal for Genoa, afterwards going up the Black Sea and loading grain for Dunkirk. The captain relied upon me so much that I had an exceedingly good time, as I was really as much in command of the ship as he was. He disliked turning out at night-time, and when rounding points, like Cape St. Vincent, he would simply say to me, when I told him that we were approaching the light: "You know what to do as well as I, Millett. I am not going to turn out." However, by good luck we managed to make the voyage without mishap. One peculiarity about this captain was that he had an enormous black moustache, which used to get between his lips when he was eating. It was a most disgusting sight to see him put a forkful of food into his mouth and comb his moustache out with his fork afterwards!

Although I was able to assist him in running the ship at sea, of course he had all the ship's business to do on shore, and the poor beggar apparently did it so badly that on arrival home he was dismissed, and, to my disgust, an old captain was appointed to our ship. I was so wild about it that I sent in my resignation to the firm, but received a telegram next day advising me to withdraw it. Scenting that promotion was coming, I withdrew it, and made another voyage to the Black Sea under the old skipper.

On arrival in London the engineer superintendent came aboard, and after I had taken him round the ship he turned round to me and said:

"Do you think you could take command of this ship, Mr. Millett?"

I laughed, and said: "I guess I could."

So he said: "Well, I want to be the first to tell you that you are going to get command, but do not let on to anybody, as you have to go up to the

office to-morrow morning and the owners will appoint you themselves."

Of course I was hugely delighted, and next morning, on my way to the office, I bought a tall hat, such as all self-respecting skippers wore in those days. I marched boldly into the office, and asked for Mr. John ——. Immediately my name was taken in, he came to the door of his room, looked across the general office at me standing by the counter, and, like the good old chap he was, yelled out so that all could hear, "Come in, CAPTAIN Millett." He could have chosen no more gratifying way of letting me know I was in command. I squared my shoulders and marched into his room to receive my instructions as to how I was to proceed. I then hurriedly obtained the necessary gold braid for my cap and clothes to denote my rank, and on arriving on board the ship soon blossomed out into full uniform. A very proud man I was when, for the first time in my life, I was saluted as captain on all sides !

## CHAPTER IX

### MY FIRST COMMAND—S.S. " BRACADAILE "

**W**E finished discharging, and the owners gave me a pilot to proceed to South Shields, where the crew were paid off. The majority signed on again, amongst them being two Shields firemen who were, without exception, the best men at their work at sea, but the most notorious of hard cases in port. As chief officer I had had to discipline them several times. I still remember their names and can see them in my mind's eye. One was called Dyas and the other one Egan, and when I was signing them on the shipping-master asked me how it was possible for me to be willing to take them, when it was notorious that they were such hard cases that they were never able to stay in a ship more than one voyage, the whole of the ship's crew from the captain downwards being only too glad to be rid of them. However, I knew what I was about, and that they did their work well at sea, and if they gave any trouble in port I was well able to deal with them.

We loaded coal for the Admiralty, and, in due course, we were ready to proceed to sea. I had engaged a chief officer called Fox, and an elderly man, with coal black hair, moustache and side whiskers, for second officer. He looked an active middle-aged man, but by the time we had got into the Bay of Biscay the dye washed off his hair and revealed him as a very old, white-headed, and white-whiskered man, much to the amazement, not



THE AUTHOR, AGED 28, WHEN IN COMMAND OF THE "BRACADAILE"



to say amusement, of everybody aboard the ship.

The pilot came aboard to move us out of the dock, and a number of friends of the sailors were down saying good-bye. Just as the ropes were being let go Dyas and Egan clambered down the wharf in their usual "leaving port" condition, fighting drunk. When they got on deck, I—being on the bridge—noticed that each of them had a bottle in his pocket. Without thinking what I was doing I jumped off the bridge and ordered them to give them to me. They very resentfully handed them over, and with murder in their eyes watched me throw them overboard. I expected the affair to end up in a scrap, and so did everybody else, but they thought better of it and staggered forward, whereupon all their friends on shore yelled out, "Well done, skipper." I suppose I had their sympathy because I had no hair on my face and looked much younger than I was, and it appeared to onlookers to be a risky thing for a young fellow to have tackled two such obviously hard cases.

The owners gave me a North Sea pilot as far as Dover, so I left the navigation down the coast to him, and, as we were making Dover at four o'clock in the morning, I lay down in the chart-room that night. I remember wondering as I went to sleep what on earth I should do when the pilot left and I should be in sole command. As a matter of fact, I got the wind up badly and dreaded his leaving. However, at four o'clock, when I was called, I went up on the bridge. He said good-bye to me, and it was with a sinking in my heart when—by the light of a hurricane lamp hung over the side—I saw him going down the ladder into the boat and realized that I had to depend upon myself. Strangely enough, when the pilot yelled out good-bye from



the boat, I turned round to the officer on the bridge with me and told him to put the engines full speed ahead, and as I set the course down Channel, felt as if I had been in command for a hundred years.

We were bound to Malta, and all went well on the trip with the exception of the steam steering-gear constantly breaking down, necessitating the ship being steered by hand most of the time. She was a beast to steer at any time, and so steering by hand was mighty hard work on the poor devil at the wheel. It was a proud man I was when we made Malta and I went on shore for the first time in a foreign port as master of a ship. The Admiralty were in a great hurry for the cargo, so we were completely discharged in three days from the time of arrival; and as the last basket of coal went over the side I had everything, including the pilot, ready to proceed to sea. To my disgust, however, I found that Dyas and Egan were missing, but on blowing the steam whistle I saw them hurriedly leaving the pub on shore to come aboard the ship. I was jumping mad and went to the gangway to receive them, threatening all manner of things which I do not think for one moment I could have done, but they in their ignorance thought I could. They slunk forward, and as soon as we got to sea I had them brought aft, and, with the power that shipmasters had in those days, fined them a fortnight's pay each for being ashore without leave, but, at the same time, told them that if they behaved themselves I would ask the Board of Trade to remit the fine.

We passed through the Straits of Messina and up the Grecian Archipelago, and I safely navigated the ship through the Dardanelles and arrived at Constantinople, where, of course, we had to take a pilot through the Bosphorus. We made a record

trip from Malta to Constantinople. Although the ship would not steam more than eight knots an hour when loaded, she was so fine lined in ballast that she averaged thirteen and one-quarter knots all the way. Of course we passed every ship. When we were clear of the Bosphorus the engineer opened her out and we did nearly fourteen knots all the way to Odessa, where, on nearing the breakwater, I received orders to proceed to Sebastopol. We drove her again as hard as we could, and on arrival there, the same night, we proceeded at once to our loading-berth, as the merchants were in a hurry for the ship. Two days after that we left to complete our cargo at Odessa, where the merchants again used every dispatch in completing our loading, which was effected in another two days, and we sailed for London, arriving there without incident, save the usual breaking down of the steam steering-gear, in forty-eight days from the time we left Shields.

The owners had always regarded the S.S. "Bracadaile" as an absolute white elephant, and were agreeably surprised at her making what was then, and is perhaps now (even for smarter ships), a record round trip. A master's reputation is often made or marred by his first trip in command; but, in my case, the owners thought a great deal more of me than I did of myself, for I knew that I had had the most phenomenal luck with the ship, and that the record trip was not due to anything else. However, they gave me an increase of wages (they were so pleased), and on completion of discharge I received orders to load from Cardiff for Genoa.

When we dropped the pilot at Dover it was beginning to blow hard from the westward, and shortly after passing Dungeness the ship, which was flying light, refused to stand up to the wind, and, in fact, one gust nearly turned her round

despite the fact that we were going full speed ahead. As the glass was falling, I turned round and ran back, and anchoring behind Dungeness, lay there quietly all night. The next morning, although I did not like the look of the sunrise, which was a most brilliant and streaky red, the wind had moderated so much that I resolved to proceed. All went well until we were off the Owers lightship, when the gale came on worse than ever, and the ship refused to steam against it. I resolved to run back to Dungeness, but, on arrival there, finding so many ships sheltering, I decided to continue to the Downs. The tide was on the flood and running strong, aided by the force of the wind, so I took a big sweep to come up to the wind and tide before dropping anchor. Just as I was on the point of doing so, the cross-channel boat, which had been sheltering, suddenly steamed across my bow, and in order to avoid collision I had to drop my anchor, with the result that, before I was able to steam up to overcome the strength of the tide and wind the whole of the chain on the anchor I had let go ran out of the hawse-pipe, despite our attempts to check it with the compressor. I dropped the other anchor immediately and brought the ship up ; but as the gale continued to freshen, I found it was necessary to go half-speed ahead on my engines, and even then the ship was surging many points each way. However, we rode the gale out, and next morning, as the weather had moderated, I hoisted the flag for the Deal boatmen to come off, in order to take me on shore to communicate with my owners.

There were no telephones in those days, and I had to telegraph. While waiting for the answer, I invited the crew of the Deal boat to join me at a small " pub," and we all had a merry time spinning

yarns. The Deal boatmen in those days were, without exception, the finest and most fearless men that could be found anywhere in the world, and one of the best examples I ever saw was the owner and boss of the boat who was attending to me. He was a man about fifty years of age, bearded, splendidly made, and looked as if he had no fear in his composition, and I can see him now leaning up against the mantelpiece of the little bar parlour joining in the banter of the other men against the youngest member of the boat's crew, who was about twenty years of age, and apparently had just got engaged. One of the men had said to him :

“ When are you going to get married, Jim ? ”

To which he answered : “ Don't know.”

Another man said : “ Has the girl got any money ? ” and Jim said “ No,” blushing furiously ; whereupon the old owner of the boat said :

“ Don't you ever marry for money, Jim. When I married my old woman I had twenty-five bob in my pocket and she had forty-nine, and she has never done talking about it since.”

Presently the answer came back from the owners to abandon my anchor and chain and proceed to Cardiff. I was taken back on board my steamer, and we proceeded ; but all this running back had consumed coal, so I had to put in to Dartmouth to replenish bunkers. The Board of Trade authorities there wanted to detain the ship until I had procured another anchor, but eventually allowed me to sail without it, to my great relief, as I had already been far too long on the passage. However, ill luck still kept with me, for that night a thick fog came on, and in the early morning, when I knew I ought to be in the vicinity of the Wolf Rock Lighthouse, the fog was so thick that it was impossible to see anything a ship's length distant.

We were going half speed, listening intently for the fog signal, but strangely enough never heard it until we saw the loom of the lighthouse not more than three hundred feet away. It was a lucky miss, but at the same time it was a bit of luck my sighting it, as I was able to take my departure and put my engines full speed ahead, and eventually got to Cardiff without further trouble.

Dyas and Egan begged me to take them again, so I did so ; but the chief engineer had got sick of nursing his old engines and constantly repairing the steam steering gear, and the second engineer was promoted to chief. My chief officer remained with me, but I engaged another second officer. Nothing of any interest occurred on the trip. We discharged our cargo at Genoa, and proceeded in ballast for Odessa.

It was the month of January and bitterly cold in the Black Sea. On nearing Odessa we found our way barred by a field of ice. I sent the chief officer up aloft to see whether he could see the end of it, and although the horizon was clear he said that the field stretched for miles and he could see no opening. I therefore steamed cautiously up to the field and found that it was about eighteen inches thick, so I came astern until I was a quarter of a mile off, and then I put full speed ahead on the engines and drove as hard as I could into the field. It was most interesting to watch the way that the ship commenced to cut her way through, gradually losing speed as she did so, but before actually doing so I came astern on my engines, backed down in the cutting that I had made for a couple of hundred yards, and then put her full speed ahead again and cut another stretch. I had a good old iron ship to handle, but if it had been a modern steel one I would not have dared to use



her as a battering ram ; none but an iron ship would have stood the strain. It took me six hours to cut through the field, which I estimate was only a mile wide, and I got to the mouth of Odessa Harbour at nine o'clock at night. The sea was calm and the light of a brilliant full moon showed me that the harbour was full of ice. I had had such a strain all day standing on the bridge in the bitter cold that, knowing that I should not get a pilot, I proceeded to ram my way into the harbour and cut myself a berth out of the ice. By great good luck I actually managed to find myself eventually in a position that, next morning, the pilot told me could not be improved upon for a berth while awaiting our turn to load.

When the old Customs officer came on board and was going through the manifest he suddenly looked up and remarked :

“ How old are you, captain ? ” to which I replied :

“ How old do you think ? ”

He said : “ Me no' know. Me look at your head, me think you fifty. Me look at your face, me think you one boy ! ” This was owing to my hair rapidly turning grey, not through worry or anxiety or even early piety, as none of these things troubled me, but simply because in my family it is hereditary to turn grey at the age of nineteen or twenty. My father was perfectly white before he was forty, and so was I.

We took in grain for Christiania, and I loaded her so deep that I could only carry sufficient bunkers to take me from the Baltic to Dartmouth, where I called in to replenish. It was the month of January. When we left Dartmouth we ran into a hard south-west gale, which we carried right along to the Norwegian coast. I got no sights, but was lucky enough after leaving the Goodwins to pick up a



light on the Danish coast which gave me my position, and after running my distance by dead reckoning I cautiously bore up to endeavour to make the land leading into Christiania Sound. It was still blowing hard, with heavy rain and snow squalls, and visibility was very poor. However, I kept going until I suddenly found myself in a small bay with rocks on both sides, on which the sea was breaking. I went astern in a hurry and luckily came across a fishing-boat, and, by means of a Norwegian sailor we had aboard, learnt from the fishermen that we were in a bay below that of the entrance to Christiania. It was a narrow escape of going ashore, but my luck was still in the ascendant, and we eventually arrived at Christiania, where I was greeted as being the youngest master of the biggest ship that had been there up to that time.

In those days Norway and Sweden were under the same Government, and my cousin, Tom Mitchell, was consul-general of both countries. As soon as it was reported to him that my steamer had arrived he sleighed down in state to call upon me.

Christiania being a comparatively small place, the news soon got round, and everybody thought that I must be a bit of a swell, for, much to my amusement, everybody made a tremendous fuss of me when I went ashore. I was there for twelve days and had a gorgeous time of it, but that is another story.

I got orders to proceed to Shields to lay the steamer up, and when we left Christiania we found that although it was the month of February the sea was like a mill pond. I instructed the chief engineer to open her out for all she was worth and see what she could do. She averaged thirteen and a half knots the whole way across, and we arrived in Shields twenty-four hours before the marine

superintendent expected us. We moored in Jarrow Slake, and I said "Good-bye" to the old ship which had been such a white elephant to others, but had behaved so well with me that my name was made with the owners.

## CHAPTER X

### MY NEXT COMMAND—S.S. "WEYBRIDGE"

I HAD been on shore two months when my old captain in the "Weybridge," on his arrival at Hamburg, asked the owners for leave for a voyage, which was granted, and I was appointed to the ship. It seemed strange to take the ship over from a man I disliked so much, and to find myself master where, as mate, I had passed so many unpleasant hours. It was bitterly cold when I got to Hamburg, and the ship was frozen in. I had to walk across ice fifteen inches thick to get to her. The remarkable thing was that the dry cold was not nearly so unpleasant as cold weather in England without a vestige of frost in the air.

We sailed shortly after for Cardiff and went under the tips to load coal. I found that a strike of sailors and firemen was taking place under the guidance—for the first time—of Mr. Havelock Wilson, who was claiming that he was holding up all the shipping in the port. He certainly was causing a lot of inconvenience, but, for all that, ships were managing to get crews on the old and inadequate wages formerly paid.

Havelock Wilson, at that time, was regarded as a firebrand and was most cordially detested by shipowners. He was the direct consequence of the Shipping Federation coming into being. As years have gone by, and he has gained experience, he has gradually proved himself to be a sensible leader of a trade union which was most urgently required,

as no other body of men in this world ever required the protection of a union more than sailors. He must be getting an old man now, as to my knowledge he has been secretary of the National Union of Firemen and Sailors for the last thirty years, and has effectively lived down the contempt and hatred with which he was regarded by shipowners. All honour be to him for having improved the sailor's lot !

On my way to the shipping office to see what steps I should have to take to get a crew, I found two or three hundred sailors and firemen lined up on the curb, with Havelock Wilson walking up and down the line in full command. I went up to him and asked him what wages he was demanding, as I wanted a crew. If I remember rightly, he said £4 for sailors and £4 10s. for firemen, to which I replied that I could not pay that amount. He told me that if I would do so I could have the pick of the two or three hundred men in front of me, who—poor devils !—were looking at me much as the lost dogs do in Battersea Dogs' Home when seeking a master in the individual who calls there. I thanked him, but said that I would get a good crew at the old wages. He assured me that I would not ; however, I did, even though it was composed of very mixed nationalities.

I had engaged two decent men as chief and second officers, and with the permission of the owners I engaged a third officer in place of the boatswain. I told the first and second officers that I was signing on a third officer in order that they should have the advantage of three watches instead of two, but they would have to arrange between themselves that from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. there was always an officer on deck in addition to the one on the bridge, so that the one on deck could act as

boatswain. The officers were delighted with this arrangement, and we eventually sailed with a cargo of coal for Buenos Ayres.

We had a good crew, but my chief officer was no disciplinarian, and was constantly in hot water with me for yarning with the sailors and firemen whenever he had an opportunity. The only real trouble I had was with the donkeyman, who was a Highlander, standing six feet four inches, broad in proportion, and as rough as they make them. He was cock of the forecastle, and, as a matter of fact, the engineers were scared of him as well, but—like all these big men—when the time came to test him he was found to be simply a man of putty. I happened to be the one to find it out. One morning in Buenos Ayres I was dressing, and happening to look out of my port at about 8 o'clock I saw the donkeyman leaving a pub just on the other side of the wharf, and making his way on board the ship, the chief engineer standing by the gangway the while and taking no notice. I sent along for the chief engineer and asked him what he meant by allowing the donkeyman to be ashore, to which he replied: "How could I stop a man like that?" I did not say anything but told him to fetch the donkeyman along and bring him into the fore cabin. He came in with his hat on, which, of course, was asking for trouble, and he got it, for I told him to take off his ruddy cap or else I would knock it off for him. To my surprise he immediately took it off and stood at attention while I got the official log-book out, and, after writing down that in consequence of his being ashore without leave I fined him a fortnight's pay, I asked him whether he had anything to say. He was chewing tobacco at the time, and—I think without meaning anything—before he answered, he deliberately spat on the

mat at the cabin door. I immediately saw red, and without thinking what I was doing, sprang up at him, got him by the throat, and Heaven only knows what I was going to do, when, to my amazement, and, I may say, relief, the man behaved like an arrant cur. He was about the strongest man ever seen aboard a ship, but he whimpered like a child, and said that he had meant no offence. He could quite easily have corpsed me if he had not been such a skunk ; however, when he went forward, he must have told the men some fancy tale, because although he still remained cock of the walk forward, it was brought to my notice that my undeserved reputation as a bucko had been greatly increased by my encounter with the donkeyman.

After loading a complete cargo of grain an army of men came aboard to fit us up for carrying live cattle on deck. The bullocks, of which there were 190, were carried on deck and in stalls, and on top of the stalls was another deck laid, on which were 970 sheep. We shipped twenty-two men and a fireman to feed and attend to the cattle ; they were the scourings of the world, who had drifted out or been stranded in Buenos Ayres, and were only too anxious to get away from the place.

We sailed, and all went well during the voyage, as we had fine weather the whole way. The worst thing was the stench of the cattle, which was simply unbearable, especially in the cabin when there was a head wind. I had a little trouble with the crew and with the cattle-men. The whole crowd came aft one day to interview me. I saw them coming, so met them at the break of the poop and asked them what they wanted. They said that they were tired of eating mutton, and wanted a change of food. I kept up a brave front, and said that if mutton was not ruddy well good enough for them



it was good enough for me, and if they didn't like it they could go without, for they would not get anything else. I ordered them forward, and told them not to come to me with such ruddy foolish complaints. To my surprise, they all turned away without a word, and I had no further trouble.

We went alongside the Deptford Cattle Market Wharf to discharge the cattle, which was done by making them walk down the gangways. I was congratulated on the condition in which the cattle were delivered, and also as regards the small number that we had lost, amounting to only three bullocks and six or seven sheep, which was a bit of a record, but was only due to the exceedingly fine passage we had made.

After discharging the cattle we had to proceed to Antwerp to unload the cargo of grain. On the way down Blackwall Reach, with the pilot in charge, we collided bow on with the S.S. "Alma" proceeding up river from Buenos Ayres with cattle. Both ships were going about eight knots an hour, so the crash was terrific, and both ships' bows were crumpled in above the water-line like paper. The pilot advised me—as the ship was not making water—to proceed to Tilbury Dock, after sending off a telegram to the owners that I was doing so, which I did. On our arrival, Mr. John —, the chief owner, came aboard, and, to my relief, all he said to me was: "Well, it's a damn bad ending to a most successful voyage, Captain Millett." Of course I was really not to blame, as the pilot was in charge, but it was not every owner who would be so sympathetic towards his captain. We had to discharge the whole of the cargo and go into dry-dock; of course everybody was paid off, and only a caretaker left aboard the ship.

I had had a very good fortnight's holiday when I got a telegram saying that the repairs were finished and the cargo reloaded, and I was to resume command. I took the ship over to Antwerp and discharged her cargo there, and received orders to proceed to Cardiff to load coal for Genoa. We made the trip to Genoa and then proceeded to Novorissik in the Black Sea to load grain for Bremen Haven. Novorissik, I was informed, was laid out by a sailor, and I must admit that he had done it in a shipshape manner. The roads were about a hundred feet wide, and the town, which was planned out in squares, American fashion, was beautifully kept, but very uninteresting from the visitor's point of view.

The trimming of the grain in the hold was all done by Russian women, and woe betide any member of the crew who attempted any familiarity with them, for they all rounded on the poor fellow who did so ! After their day's work was over they were begrimed with grain dust, and used to walk to the beach about two or three hundred yards away, undress, and bathe in a state of nature. Needless to say, telescopes and binoculars were at a premium on those occasions.

We had a fine run to Bremen Haven, which was nothing but a small village just below Bremen. We caused quite a scare there with a monkey that we had aboard the ship. It got loose and frightened several women out of their lives by climbing up and peering through their bedroom windows ! What became of it we were unable to find out, but we never saw it again.

After discharging I took the ship on to Cardiff, where I handed her back to her former commander, and was informed by my owners that on the arrival of the S.S. " Pembridge " I was to take command

of her. I had three weeks on shore, and then received instructions to go over to Antwerp to take command. She had just finished discharging at that port, and was to load railway iron for Port Elizabeth in South Africa. We had a fine but uninteresting run out there, and as I steamed into the harbour I thought of the time, twenty-five years previously, when I had entered it in a sailing ship on my first voyage to sea. I found the town much grown, and whereas twenty-five years before there had only been an occasional mail steamer, but a whole fleet of fine sailing ships, there was now a whole fleet of steamers and only one or two sailing ships.

I remembered that in a sailing ship it was the custom to buoy the anchor, so I followed out this practice, and had a buoy attached to mine when I let go in five fathoms of water. Lucky for me that I did so! A few days after, when I was on shore at a theatre one evening, a messenger came in to say that the S.S. "Pembridge" had been in collision and was drifting. I hurriedly left the theatre and went off in a tugboat. I found that a steamer had drifted down on top of the chain and parted it, causing my ship to drift before the second anchor was let go to bring her up, by which time her sternpost only had two feet of water under it. I ordered steam to be got up, and at daybreak I steamed up to the point where, by the position of the buoy on the anchor, I reckoned the end of the chain would be lying. I then dropped my anchor, and sending the chief officer away in the gig with a boat's grapnel attached to a heaving-line, he trailed it across the spot in which the chain was supposed to be lying, with the very happy result that he hooked it the first time. We then lowered down a small kedge attached to a

wire, and when we hove it up we discovered that we had been fortunate enough to hook the chain only about a couple of fathoms from the end, which made it a very simple matter for us to heave it aboard and shackle on the other part of the chain. Instead, therefore, of having to pay the usual tariff rate of about forty pounds for recovering the chain and anchor we got it done free of expense.

We discharged our cargo without incident, and I received orders to proceed in ballast to Pensacola. Again we had a fine trip and put in to St. Thomas in the West Indies for bunkers. All the coal is carried aboard in baskets on the heads of negresses, who walk up one plank, dump the coal, and turn round and walk down another plank. There are so many at work that there is one endless stream of coal being shot into the bunkers, so the work does not take long.

We sailed, and after setting the course I turned in. At one o'clock in the morning I was awakened by the second officer with the news that a Dutch sailor, who had given a certain amount of trouble during the voyage, was asleep on the look-out, and he could do nothing with him.

I turned out, not feeling in the best of tempers, and in my pyjamas walked along to the fore-castle head. There I found the look-out man sitting on one of the bitts, clad only in a pair of trousers, and fast asleep. There was a brilliant full moon and everything was as light as day. I brought the flat of my hand down as hard as I could on the man's back, and the force of the blow sounded on his bare skin like a pistol shot. Apparently he was in a drunken stupor, but it effectually roused him. He started up and made one dive for me, not knowing at that moment who I was, though, of course, he

recognized me immediately we came to grips. He went mad, and as he was a very strong man it took me all my time to prevent him succeeding in his purpose, which was to throw me over the rail of the ship. The second mate came running along to lend me a hand, but, foolishly feeling that I was a match for the man, I ordered him back to the bridge and went on struggling; and instead of his putting me over the ship's side I managed to toss him over the rail on to the fore deck, where he lay stunned. By that time I was about played out myself, so I staggered along to the bridge and told the second mate to go aft and tell the chief officer to come along and help me to put the man in irons. The chief officer turned out, and, taking a *lignum vitæ* fid with him, he and the second mate went forward and found the man still lying unconscious where I had thrown him. They got a bucket of water and doused it over him, and on his recovering consciousness and seeing the handcuffs all ready to be put on, he showed fight once more, whereupon the chief officer fetched him a swipe on the head with the fid, and he lapsed into unconsciousness once more. They then put the handcuffs on him, doused him with water again, and when he recovered brought him along to the upper bridge. I chained him to one of the stanchions, whereupon he threatened--when he should get loose--to murder the lot of us.

The next morning I consulted with the officers, and we decided that he was too dangerous to be loose, so we escorted him along to the after 'tween decks and leg-shackled him to a stanchion. Every day after that I used to allow him on deck for an hour, while I walked up and down the other side of the deck, with a loaded revolver handy in my pocket. On arrival at Pensacola we hoisted the signal that



we wanted the police boat, and the police came aboard and took him on shore. Shortly afterwards the consul held a court martial and he was sentenced to be dismissed from the ship and to be put in jail for a month. Strangely enough, the ship had to pay for his keep there at the rate of one dollar a day, but, of course, I recovered it by deducting the amount from the man's wages.

Just before we left Pensacola the man was released, and the police, in order to avoid any possible trouble by the man seeking me out, had him shipped on board a "blue-nose" sailing ship, and a very tough one at that. The Dutchman evidently found it so, for two nights afterwards he took a plank and paddled himself three-quarters of a mile to the shore, but before leaving the ship, having thrown overboard the windlass levers. The next morning, when he was discovered to be missing and the windlass levers also, the captain and chief officer of the Nova Scotia barque absolutely prayed that he should be delivered into their hands once more, so that they could get a bit of their own back; but whether they succeeded in getting him or not I do not know, as we sailed that same day.

In Pensacola we loaded a full cargo of pitch-pine logs, which were floated off to the ship in rafts, each consisting of about a hundred pieces. When we were nearly loaded, the chief officer awakened me at 6 o'clock one morning to say that he did not like the look of the weather, and that the glass was going down terribly. I turned out and saw at once that we were in for a hurricane, so immediately gave orders for steam to be raised as soon as possible. It was fortunate that I did so, as it soon came on to blow with hurricane force, and I had to steam half speed ahead on my engines to keep the ship from drifting. We rode the hurricane out, but I



saw at the worst part of the gale no less than five steamers and three or four full-rigged sailing ships dragging their anchors. One sailing ship drifted down on the top of another one, and their rigging got entangled. It was an interesting sight to see the masts tumbling down, but I am glad to say that no mishaps were reported. Any ship that had drifted so as to touch the ground suffered no damage, as it was only a very soft, muddy bottom.

The hurricane commenced about 8 o'clock in the morning, was at its worst about 12 o'clock, and was all over by 3 o'clock, but not a raft of timber remained alongside any ship, the shore for miles being strewn with the pieces thereof. Several bloody encounters occurred in salving the timber, as the men who were doing it quarrelled as to who should claim the best pieces. They were armed with long, very sharp-pointed boat-hooks for salving the timber, which they used on each other when they lost their tempers, with the result that several men were either killed or badly injured.

Pensacola at that time was a poor specimen of a place, and was really more of a big village than a town, but I suppose by this time it is grown out of all recognition.

We finished loading and managed to get across the Bar safely. We then proceeded up the coast of America to Sydney, Cape Breton, to coal. On leaving there I made for Cape Race to take my departure, and just saw the lighthouse before the fog which is prevalent in those regions closed down, and for six nights and five days I never got another observation, as I carried the fog the whole way; but with my usual good luck picked up Bishop's Rock Lighthouse quite safely. I went to Hull to discharge, and when finished took the ship round

to Cardiff, where I left her. I had received permission to take a voyage off, owing to my wishing to get married to a girl to whom I had been engaged for the last two years.

## CHAPTER XI

### EXPERIENCES IN THE EAST AND WEST INDIES

I REMAINED at home four months, while the "Pembridge" was making a trip to Buenos Ayres and back, and I then received orders to rejoin her at Cardiff. We loaded coal for Batavia, and I engaged three officers, who proved excellent, and a fairly good crew. The chief engineer was a splendid man called Hume. His sense of discipline was so high that although we were great chums in private or on shore, yet when on duty he showed an example to everybody on board by never presuming on my friendship for him.

We had an uneventful but interesting trip out, and on arrival at Batavia I followed the example of all other shipmasters in living at an hotel on shore. I felt rather mean in doing so, as the heat on board ship, added to the coal-dust permeating everything, made the life of those on board absolutely unbearable. Even at the hotel one felt the heat severely. The bedrooms were without windows, and without bed-clothes of any description, except the sheet one lay on. The pillow was hard, as of course no one could lie on a feather pillow, and there was a second pillow made like a small hard bolster, to serve as a prop for one's legs, in turning over to try and find a cool part of the bed. Of course the beds were carefully curtained against mosquitoes, but one or two always managed to find a way in, no matter how carefully one manipulated the curtains, with



THE "FEMBRIDGE"



the result that there was much feverish hunting and cursing until the beasts were killed. European ladies, who were principally Dutch, found that the native style of dress was infinitely preferable to that to which they had been accustomed. The costume was scanty, and consisted apparently of one long, wide strip of material simply wrapped round them, with a little jacket for a bodice. Even in this they looked uncomfortably warm.

When the discharge was finished I received orders to proceed to Surabaya, and on the short trip round all hands were kept busy in washing out the holds, in preparation for loading a cargo of sugar. Surabaya is about a mile up a river, and owing to shoal-water, ships had to lie about two miles from the shore, the cargo coming off in lighters carrying about fifty tons each. It not only being unsafe but unwise to employ your own boat's crew, it is the practice to engage a native crew to man the ship's boat to take the master ashore every morning and bring him off in the evening. As there were many ships loading at the time I was there we masters used to have a mighty good time at the hotel on shore ; but there is nothing to see of much interest in the place. One peculiarity is that, according to the Dutch administration, natives of all classes are compelled, after sundown, to carry a lamp, in order that they may be seen. I presume that this custom dates from the time when natives were in the habit of waylaying the few Europeans in the country with the intent to rob or murder them. The shops are mostly Chinese, the natives confining themselves to the sale of fruit and sweet-meats, and to labouring.

I received orders to proceed to the port of Passoeran to complete loading, and found it to consist of a few houses, together with a sugar



factory. I had carefully to sound my way as near the shore as I dared, to find that even then I was a good one mile from the shore when anchored in about twenty-five feet of water. The sugar came off in lighters as usual and we completed loading in a couple of days, when, with a sigh of satisfaction, and without a regret, I left the steaming, fever-stricken place, and proceeded on our passage to Delaware Breakwater for orders, which, after another uneventful voyage, I found had not arrived.

Delaware Breakwater is a very bleak and uninteresting place to lie at. The quarantine doctor was so interested in the cosiness of my quarters and the curios that I had collected that he asked permission to bring off his wife and his wife's sister to see them. They came, and I found them two charming young ladies who had never been on board ship before, and so were much interested in all that they saw. On leaving the ship I had to assist them over the rail, and found it necessary to lift them, which was no great matter, as they were light as feathers. As they waved back to me from the motor-launch I turned round to the pilot, who was a rather coarse American, and remarked how light the ladies were, whereupon he answered :

"Yaas, they're like all them Boston girls—there ain't much meat on them."

This I thought was rather a crude way of speaking of them. But he was cruder still when I went ashore with him to telegraph, as, when we were walking along the side-walk of the little village he lived in, he pointed to a woman on the opposite side of the street, and said :

"See that there woman ! That's the woman I sleep with."

I answered : "What do you mean ?"

To which he replied :

“ Ain’t I telling you ? That’s the woman I married.”

Different men, different ways of expressing themselves !

The following day I received orders to proceed to Philadelphia, where we discharged our cargo of sugar, and, to my satisfaction, every package turned out in good condition, through our having been able, owing to fine weather passage, to keep our hatches off for ventilation.

I received orders to proceed to Savannah, to load a general cargo for Copenhagen. At Savannah we found that everybody was keen on learning to ride the safety bicycle, and so Hume and I decided that we would do so. For that purpose we went to a big barn of a building, where all sorts and conditions of people were being held on to bicycles, the instructor running with them and, without the knowledge of the riders, letting go every now and then to see how the learners were progressing. When a rider realized this he or she would invariably lose confidence and tumble off. Both Hume and I had this experience ; but after a couple of hours our instructor told us that we could safely ride a machine anywhere, and so naturally the first thing we did was to go and buy two machines, which we afterwards carried with us, and used in every port we came to, though Hume never had much confidence in his own riding.

On leaving Savannah, knowing that I could not carry sufficient coal to take me the whole distance, I wrote my wife to meet me at Dartmouth, where I intended to bunker, and I also wrote my owners asking their permission for her to join the ship there. We had a fine weather passage over, and I was overjoyed to meet my wife. She, on her part,

thoroughly enjoyed the experience of being on her husband's ship for her first trip to sea.

While we were in Copenhagen the wife of the late King died, and was buried in the family grave at a church outside the town. My agent drove me out into the country, where we stood in a field overlooking the road which the funeral procession had to follow. I had a very close view of our present King, who was then only Prince George, as his grandmother, Queen Victoria, was still living. Walking by his side was the late Czar of Russia, and I was very much struck by the close resemblance the two bore to each other.

On completion of the discharge I had orders to proceed to Santos in Brazil, and received permission to take my wife with me for the voyage. I made no change in my officers or engineers, but of course we had a new crowd of men, amongst whom it happened there was one very "hard case" of a fireman. He asserted himself from the moment we started, and the chief engineer, Mr. Hume, who, although a very quiet man, had a vile temper, told me that we were going to have trouble from him. This soon came. I was walking up and down the poop, and saw the fireman come out of the stokehold, go over to Hume, and apparently speak insolently to him. I was not surprised to see Hume jump out of his chair, and in an instant start lamming the fireman all round the deck. Hume made no attempt to defend himself, but his two fists were driving as hard as they could into the man's body and face, with the result that in about fifteen seconds the man was practically knocked out. I meanwhile had rushed forward to stop the fight, but it was all over by the time I got there, and when the man recovered sufficiently I ordered him forward. But before going he turned round to

Hume and said : " Shake hands, mister ; you've done to me what four ruddy policemen couldn't do all together at Barry." After that experience, although cock of the walk in the forecastle, he was as good as gold at his work and in his behaviour to those in authority.

We had a fine-weather passage to Santos, which I found to be infested with yellow fever, and my agents advised me to take my wife to a little seaside resort where most of the Europeans went in order to be in a healthier climate than Santos afforded. I forget the name of the place, but it was one of the prettiest spots that could be imagined, with a very good hotel and a lovely white beach stretching down to the sea. The hotel was packed with English and Americans, who were extremely good to my wife and myself. Amongst the guests was the chief engineer of the San Paulo Railway, who kindly asked my wife and myself to visit him in order that we could see the famous wire-rope railway. It was rather a thrilling experience being hauled up precipices by a wire rope, but the scenery stretching down to the valley, and extending as far as the eye could see, was simply superb. What on earth would have happened if the wire rope had snapped ? This, during thirty and more years, has never happened, owing to the care taken in the constant inspection of the rope.

I had orders to proceed to Galveston when our coal cargo was discharged. We said good-bye to Santos with no regret, and I congratulated myself that none of the crew had developed fever. We again had a fine run, and, on arrival at Galveston, found we were to load cotton for Hamburg. Galveston at that time was built on a spit of land not many feet above the level of the sea. In 1900 a tidal wave practically wiped the place out, and

thousands of lives were lost. The level of the land was then raised before rebuilding, and now the city stands at a higher level. It was the first town I had come across that had electric tramways, as up to that time my experiences had all been of horse or wire-rope drawn traffic. The weather whilst we were there was hot, and my wife and I spent all our time at the hotel, from the grounds of which it was most interesting to see the crowds surf-bathing. In due course the cargo was loaded and we sailed, nothing of any interest occurring on the passage.

In Hamburg I found that the good-fellowship that we had always experienced from the Germans appeared to be diminishing, as they were still sore over the action we took in mobilizing our navy when the German Emperor sent his famous telegram to Kruger. In many cases the German in authority was as rude as he could be to Englishmen, and while I was there it happened that in a restaurant two English captains were sitting at a table next to some Germans, who, recognizing their nationality, began cursing everything that was British. The captains took no notice, wishing to avoid a row, but when one big German speaking in broken English said to the others: "Yes, my friends, ve vill haf Italy for breakfast, France for lunch, and England for dinner," one of the captains could control himself no longer, and, turning round in a temper, said: "Yes, and by the time you've finished you'll have the ruddiest fit of indigestion you ever had in your lives!"

A free fight seemed inevitable, but some other Englishmen there immediately got hold of the two captains and advised them to leave before there was further trouble.

I received orders to proceed to Cardiff, and again



had permission to carry my wife, as we were bound for Rio. I had a new third officer, but the other officers were the same as on the previous voyage. We again had a good trip, but on arrival at Rio I found yellow fever raging. I immediately took rooms for my wife and myself at a hotel up in the mountains. None of the staff spoke English, so all our wants had to be interpreted by other English people staying at the hotel, or by signs. I remember amusing the native waiter extremely by imitating the sounds of the animals that I thought were represented by the items on the menu.

I used to go down to the ship every day to transact my business, and so forgathered with other masters at the ships' chandlers. Amongst them was a tall, gaunt, very pale and thin man, who looked anything but a seafaring man. He was but a boy in appearance—indeed, I heard afterwards that he was only twenty-five. Being interested in him, I asked who he was, and was informed that he was the captain of a Nova Scotia barque lying in the harbour. So I introduced myself to him, and we had lunch together. He was an extremely well-educated man, and apparently was the son of the owner of the ship—together a charming man to meet. We arranged to meet again next day for lunch, but when I turned up at the ships' chandlers at 12 o'clock as arranged, and asked for him, I was told that he was buried, having died of yellow fever at six o'clock that morning! The awful suddenness of his death and burial made me wonder what might happen to me or my wife. However, I congratulated myself that we should be sailing in three days; but imagine my apprehension when, on the morning of the day we were finishing the discharge, my wife was taken violently ill! I called a doctor, and by an interpreter he told me that he couldn't



say definitely what was the matter. It might be typhoid or yellow fever or anything else, and he could only wait and see. My state of mind may be conceived. The ship was due to sail next morning, and unless my wife were better it would mean that I should either have to leave her behind, or stay with her and send the ship away under the charge of the first officer. I had an extremely anxious time worrying over the matter, but the following morning she seemed a little better, and when the doctor came I asked him whether it was safe to take her away to sea. He, knowing my predicament, and as a matter of fact neither knowing what was the matter nor apparently caring much whether my wife lived or died, told me I could take her away that evening; and as she herself wished to be away from such an infested place as Rio, I carried her aboard the ship and immediately sailed. After we got outside the harbour and I had set my course I began to worry as to whether I had been wise in bringing her to sea, as she could scarcely speak and was looking wretched. However, after a sleepless night looking after her, I was glad to see by her appearance that she seemed better, and the reading of the thermometer showed me that her temperature was normal. The day was fine, so I got her on deck to give her the full benefit of the sea breezes, with the result that when evening came she was out of danger, and after two or three days was quite strong. I do not know, and never shall know, what her illness was, but undoubtedly the pure sea air drove whatever it was out of her system and saved her from something worse.

We were bound again for Galveston, and the weather was fine and the Gulf Stream flowing strongly, with the result that for two or three days

we did over three hundred miles 'a day, which meant that the Stream was flowing at something over three miles per hour. On nearing the Caribbean Islands the glass fell very suddenly, and the sunset showed the most wicked tints that anyone in the ship had ever seen. I am not artist enough to describe them, but what with the low glass, the oily sea, and then this almost uncanny combination of threatening and sinister colours in the sky, every one on board felt decidedly anxious.

However, to my unutterable relief, the glass began to shift up again about a couple of hours after sunset, and I can only presume that there must have been a severe local disturbance somewhere. If so, we were very lucky to escape it, as, the ship being in ballast trim, and having but little sea-room in consequence of being surrounded by islands, we should have had an anxious time if a hurricane had come away. We kept the fine weather all the way to Galveston, where every one we met on the previous voyage was glad to welcome my wife and myself again. We found that our favourite hotel had been burnt down, and nothing was left of it except the foundations. This spoilt our pleasure, as we could no longer spend our days on the porch, basking in the sun, and watching the people bathe, as we had done on the previous voyage. We loaded grain from an elevator, from which there were about ten pipes leading down into two of our holds ; these pipes were about one foot in diameter, giving a constant stream of grain, in the same way as a water pipe would have done, with the result that it took but a few hours to load the four thousand tons that we could carry. I remember that a new steamer was lying astern loading cotton, and, being built on the most economical method allowed by Lloyd's, she looked

so shoddy that I went aboard her in order to see the most modern type of cheap tramp. I had to jump from her rail on to her deck, and to my amazement, with even my comparatively small weight, the deck seemed to spring. It was the favourite joke with the shipmasters after she had sailed to say that owing to the screwing in of the bales of cotton the ship went out with two feet more of beam than when she came in! I won't mention the name of the ship or the company to which she belonged, but she certainly was constructed on the cheapest principle that I had ever seen up to that time, or have seen since.

We had orders for Havre, and, as the ship was deeply laden, I did not look forward with any pleasure to going across the Atlantic in the late part of November. All went well for the first few days, and then the glass began to fall and I knew we were in for bad weather. It came on to blow from the westward, and so long as we were running before the wind we did not care much, as, of course, the gale helped the ship along. However, the glass kept falling, and my wife began to get very nervous, hearing the seas thump on board. I took her along to the chart-room on the upper bridge, where she lay down on my bunk, accompanied by her fox-terrier, who was, if anything, more afraid than she was on hearing the noise of the seas breaking aboard and washing over the ship. Every time the sea struck the side of the house the dog yelped and shivered with fear, which, of course, added to my wife's fright. But although I wanted to take the dog away from her, she would not let me do so, as I could not be with her all the time, and she felt that the dog was some company for her. The gale increased, and as I preferred always to remain on the deck in such a case, I stayed on the bridge, but

every few moments I had to go in and comfort my wife, who was nearly hysterical with fear. At last I had to dose her with brandy, and although she was a teetotaller, and I gave her a whole bottle of brandy in less than eight hours, her fear was so great that it had no more effect on her than if it had been water.

What with anxiety for the ship and for her I cursed the day that I ever wanted her to be at sea with me, and I made up my mind that never again would I add to my responsibilities by having my wife with me on a voyage which was not certain to be a fine-weather one. As a matter of fact, my experience is such that I doubt, if I were a ship-owner, if I would allow the captains to carry their wives. A shipmaster has quite enough responsibilities in his duty to his owners, and to those whose lives are entrusted to his care, without the addition of his wife.

The hurricane blew itself out, and we found that we had got through without any damage whatever. The wind died away, and the sea kept as calm as a duck-pond. The glass rose steadily and kept on rising day after day, and for five days we were steaming through a dead calm. By the time we came to the Lizard the glass was so high that I knew that nothing but an easterly gale could be anticipated. Not wishing to encounter it before we got safely into Havre, which was the port we were bound for, I gave the chief engineer instructions to open his engines out, and I was thankful to have picked the pilot up at Havre before the gale, a regular snorter from the north-east, broke. It held for two days, and we hugged ourselves that we were comfortably in dock. As soon as I could assure my wife that she would have a fine run across the Channel she decided to get home. The sea had

become an absolute horror to her, and was so ever after.

On completion of discharge I had orders for Cardiff to load coal for Malta, where we finally arrived. Nothing of any interest occurred there except that Hume, the chief engineer, and I one Sunday morning took our bicycles ashore for a ride into the interior of the island. As I said before, Hume was never confident when riding and used to wobble whenever he met anything. Coming back to the ship along a country lane, I was ahead of him about one hundred yards, and I passed a young Maltese gentleman, immaculately dressed, swinging a cane. I glanced at him as I passed by, and a few yards farther on, turning round a corner, I looked behind to see how Hume was getting on. He was not in sight, so I slowed down, and, as he still didn't turn the corner, I stopped and determined to go back for him. At that moment he came along, pedalling hard, and as he got to me he called out: "Hurry away as fast as you can." I jumped on my bicycle and pedalled furiously after him. When I had caught him up, I asked him what was the matter, and he said, "Did you see that ruddy Maltee swinging a cane?" and I told him I had. He then told me that on seeing the Maltee he was uncertain which side to go past him, and began to wobble, whereupon that gentleman deliberately put his cane through the front wheel of his bicycle, causing him naturally to come a header off the machine. I said:

"What did you do?"

"Do?" he said. "I got up and caught the blighter a beauty full in the face, and left him lying in the road rolling in the mud, and then rode after you as hard as I could."

Luckily the ship was finishing discharge the next



day, but until we sailed Hume and I were scared out of our lives that the police would trace us and that we should be had up for assault.

I received orders to proceed to Taganrog, in the Sea of Azov, to load grain for Hamburg. We had a lovely fine-weather trip, and the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus were looking their best. In those days the Turks were very fond of the English, and it was a pleasure to mix with them. The entrance to the Sea of Azov is through Kertch Straits, which are very narrow, and at that time only had about nineteen to twenty-one feet of water. There is a guardship stationed there, and every ship passing through the Straits has to receive permission to do so on payment of dues. As the Sea of Azov is very shoal, the anchorage for vessels in Taganrog is twenty-seven miles away from the town, from which the cargo is brought off in twin-screw steam lighters, holding up to one thousand tons of grain.

We captains had naturally to live the greater part of our time on shore, in order to attend to the ships' business, and we all put up at a big boarding-house called "Madame's." Madame was a very cheerful Russian widow of uncertain age, and she and a "maid-of-all-work" had a considerable amount of trouble in looking after as many as twenty of us masters at one time. We were like a lot of boys together, no matter what our respective ages were. Our greatest fun was to get hold of the maidservant, who was called "Manya," and frighten the life out of her, whereupon, although she knew everything was being done in joke, she would scream at the top of her voice for "Madame," whereupon we used to imitate her, with the result that her and our cries together might have been heard a mile away. "Madame" would come rushing in and slap us right and left, and call us a naughty lot of children.



We were a merry crowd, there is no doubt about that, and we had nothing to do except make life pass as pleasantly as possible, although, of course, there were always one or two disgruntled ship-masters with us. It was bitterly cold, with snow lying thick everywhere, and our favourite relaxation was to go to a bath-house and have Russian steam baths, which consisted of about twenty men of mixed nationality, in a state of nature, being placed in a room which was absolutely suffocating with hot steam, where one stood until one could no longer breathe, and by that time the perspiration would be streaming off us. We then had to go into another room, where we had shower baths, and from there we went into another room where the water was showered from hot till it gradually became quite cool. We then dressed and came out into the bitter cold like "giants refreshed," and feeling most comfortably clean.

During my stay in Taganrog there was a strike of the stevedores, but at the first meeting held after they had ceased work the military commander let loose a squad of Cossacks, with their whips, amongst the strikers. I am glad to say I did not see what occurred, but I was told afterwards that the brutes rode right through the crowd of strikers, knocking them down, trampling them with their horses, and beating them on their heads and bodies with their knouts. The strike was over at once, and the poor devils returned to work. The Russian labourer from infancy was treated more or less like an animal, and grew up without education or a soul that he could call his own. Nevertheless, both men and women were happy and apparently contented, for they were always ready to laugh or joke, and appeared to be well fed.

Women labourers were used for trimming the

grain in the holds, at which they worked well and cheerfully; but they resented being found fault with unnecessarily by the ship's officers. For instance, on the steamer lying next to mine, the chief officer loved to show his authority, and had no tact in his treatment of either his own men or anyone working on his ship. It appeared that on his going down one of the holds he began to curse the women for not having trimmed the cargo in the manner he considered necessary, with the result that, before he was aware of their intention, a dozen of them dropped their shovels, threw him down amongst the grain, opened the top of his trousers, tied the bottoms round his ankles, and shovelled grain into him until his trousers could hold no more, and then they chased him out of the hold, smacking him with their shovels. Of course the joke went all round the ships, with full details, and I imagine that he never heard the last of the incident. It cured him at any rate of cursing women who knew their work of trimming probably better than he did.

Up to this time it had been a custom in the Black Sea trade, from time immemorial, for the captains to supply mats for separating the cargo, for which the merchants made a certain payment, and consequently, when once a captain had the mats and was engaged in Black Sea trade, the payment made by the merchants was all profit to him. Further, it was the custom of the merchants to give the captains a gratuity, based upon the weight of the grain they carried. The captains used to make anything from sixty to a hundred pounds every voyage in mat money and gratuities, and, when regularly employed in that trade, naturally soon began to accumulate a fortune.

Unfortunately some of them became shipowners themselves, and, knowing how much money was

made by their captains, human nature being what it is, they began to get envious, with the result that several of the shipowners put their heads together and informed their captains that in future the mat money had to be to the ship's account, and gratuities given by the merchants had to be credited to the owners. This naturally upset the captains of the ships, and also made the merchants extremely angry, as they claimed that the gratuity was only given to the shipmasters in order that they would be certain to pay every attention to the good storage and subsequent delivery of the cargo. They determined to outwit the owners, and this is how it was done.

The merchant would say to the captain : " Who mats your ship, captain ? "

The captain would reply : " The owners."

Whereupon the merchant would say : " I refuse to allow the owner to mat the ship, and I intend to do it myself, so, captain, let me know the number of mats you find it necessary to use, and I shall be pleased to give you the difference between the cost and the schedule of payment. With regard to the gratuity, here is an official letter to you to say that I absolutely decline to pay your owners any gratuity, but, captain, what is your wife's address ? "

The result can be guessed at. In any case, the wife was extremely pleased when she received a draft from an unknown source for a very substantial amount. This, unfortunately, happened to the wife of one of the junior captains in the same employ as myself, and the silly fool of a woman took it to the owners to know what it all meant !

I do not know what the owners answered, though if it was any satisfaction to her it meant a whole lot of trouble for her husband when he came home !

Since that time I understand that as the merchants found that some of the captains had to refund the gratuity, or were afraid to retain it, they ceased to give it. The greediness of the owners, therefore, only spoilt things for the captains, and they reaped no benefit themselves.

We had a fine trip home to London, where I was called upon to explain to my owners why I had not credited the gratuity ; but on production of the letter the Russian merchant had given me, nothing more was said, and I received orders, on completion of discharge, to proceed to Shields to load anthracite coal for Surabaya.

## CHAPTER XII

### IN WHICH I "SWALLOW THE ANCHOR" AND FIND IT AGREES WITH ME

I HAD orders to proceed via the Cape, and to bunker at Las Palmas. We had a good run out to the latter place, and then for fifty-two days I had the most monotonous existence a man could possibly have, for the weather was fine and the navigation was simple, until we were approaching Java via the Bali Straits. These are very narrow, with deep water right alongside the banks, and it was most interesting to see the native houses, and women and children so close that one could have spoken to them easily, while they gazed in astonishment as the ship steamed rapidly by. In fact, they seemed to be quite as much interested as the monkeys, with which the trees were alive.

On approaching Surabaya there was another channel to navigate, and for five miles the water was so shoal that we had to steam through mud, the ship's speed being reduced in consequence to about three miles per hour. When we were three parts of the way through, the chief engineer came rushing on to the bridge to say that we should have to stop, as the feed-pipe was getting choked. I told him that he would have to keep her going at any cost, as if we had stopped the engines we should probably not have been able to move again without lightening the cargo. Like the good chap he was, he took the risk, and a few minutes after that we were in deep water and all was safe. The ship

literally seemed to give a sigh of relief as she felt herself clear of the mud. On coming to anchor the stevedore who had loaded my ship with sugar on the previous voyage came aboard, and said that he had received no information that my ship was expected. I went ashore with him to my former agents, and they also informed me that they had heard nothing about my ship being due at their port. On my showing them my copy of the bill of lading, they advised me to go to the gas company to see whether they knew anything of the cargo.

On arrival there we were shown into the manager's room, and I found him to be a Dutchman with no knowledge of English, so my stevedore had to act as interpreter. He at once said he was the consignee for the cargo, and produced his bill of lading.

There was the usual clause in the charter party as to the receiver of the goods having the option of weighing the cargo, or being allowed two per cent of the freight in lieu of weighing. He apparently did not understand this clause, and asked me what it meant. I was so astonished that I told him through the interpreter I was not there to teach him his business, whereupon he said he would take the cargo without weighing. I naturally expected him when he paid my freight to deduct two per cent of it, but he paid in full; and when I remitted the whole of it to my owners without comment they were astonished to receive ninety odd more pounds than they had anticipated, but they did not present me with any part of it.

There were several ships loading and discharging, and we masters used to spend most of our time together at a very decent hotel. One of the masters was in trouble with his owners, and had received a letter from them instructing him that on his arrival at his port of discharge on the Continent he was to send in his resignation. He was a



dare-devil sort of a chap, and he told us (we did not believe him) that he had written to his owners as follows :

“ DEAR SIRs,

“ In answer to your letter of ——— in which you request me to send in my resignation on arrival at the port of discharge, I beg to state that I have no intention of doing so. If you do not know when you have a good shipmaster, I know when I have good owners.

“ Yours faithfully,  
“ ——— ”

I happened to meet him in Cardiff at the end of the voyage, and to my surprise found him still in command of the same ship. He told me that he had never heard another word about sending in his resignation, and I heard afterwards that he remained in the same service for over two years longer.

There were two masters of the same company, both loading sugar, and while I was very friendly with one, I did not like the other. Before they sailed they had arranged with each other as to the amount they should put in for to their owners for their own personal expenses while at Surabaya. This was invariably the arrangement when there were two ships belonging to the same company in port together ; but to show how little loyalty there was between shipmasters in those days I regret to say that my friend, when I met him some months afterwards, told me he had received a letter from his owners asking him to explain why his expenses at Surabaya were very nearly double those of the other man !

While I was at Surabaya two of my firemen complained of feeling feverish, and fearing that they

might have fever I took them ashore in the boat to the hospital. The authorities there took charge of them on my agreeing to pay so much a day for each of them. I had the idea that the men were malingering, especially as I could see how pleased they were at the prospect of having a good time at the hospital. I left them at about ten o'clock in the morning, and the next morning at ten o'clock I paid them a visit to see how they were getting on, and when they saw me from their beds they stretched out their arms appealingly to me, saying: "For God's sake, captain, take us out of this." I asked what was the matter, and one of them, who could not contain himself, said, "They're ruddy well starving us! They have not given us a single thing to eat since we have been in here." I made inquiries, and the nurses told me that it was the invariable practice of the doctor not to give anything in the shape of food to anybody in the hospital who he thought might be sickening for fever of some kind. I explained this to the men and thought that food would shortly be given to them. I left them, and was coming out of the front entrance when I met the doctor, and asked him what he thought about my men. He replied scornfully that they were shamming, and that he was going to teach them a lesson. I chuckled to myself and deferred my visit to the hospital until the evening of the next day. When the men saw me, although they were both "hard cases," they almost cried as they told me that all that had been given them to eat since they left the ship was a little sago. They promised they would do anything if I would only take them back to the ship; and on the doctor informing me that there was nothing the matter with them I, much to their relief, let them come back with me. The language they used when telling the

rest of their mates all that had occurred was enough, I was told, to shock even the ship's cat !

On completion of discharge I had orders to proceed to Saigon, and on the evening of the day we sailed the second officer developed fever. Next morning the chief officer was down with it, which left only the third officer and myself to look after the ship. By the evening I felt ill, and found my temperature rising, but as we were navigating through the Carimata Straits, in which there are hundreds of islands, I had to stay on the bridge, with the result that on arrival at Saigon I was nearly dead. In fact, the second officer, who had by that time recovered from the fever, told me afterwards that he thought my time had come. However, my very good constitution, with a couple of days in bed with a doctor prescribing for me, shook the fever out of me, and I was able to enjoy the comforts of the very well-administered French city of Saigon. It is a delightful place to live in, with plenty of music and dancing for entertainment. The native population is, of course, Chinese, and I was informed, with what truth I do not know, that if anyone falls into the river no attempt is made by the other natives to save him from drowning, owing to their being fatalists. We loaded rice and I sailed away from Saigon regretfully, for I had thoroughly enjoyed the gay French life, every European one met being most friendly.

We had a dead calm to Singapore, where I put in to bunker, and on leaving there actually carried the calm the whole way to Dunkirk. If I made a thousand similar trips I do not suppose that I should ever have one like we had that time, for there was no movement in the ship from the time we left Saigon until we arrived at Dunkirk. The ornaments on the table and the mantelpiece in my

saloon were not lashed, and the hatches were never on, the consequence being that the ventilation of the holds was so good that on discharging at Dunkirk I was congratulated on having turned out the finest cargo of rice that had ever been received there. The merchants were so pleased that they gave me a gratuity of thirty pounds, which was the more appreciated because it was quite unexpected. They also gave the chief officer and chief engineer a gratuity, which was a most unusual thing to do, and of course it was not refused.

As my wife wrote imploring me to stay at home, knowing that we were shortly to be blessed with a child, I applied for a voyage off, which the owners granted, so I took the ship round to Cardiff on completion of the discharge and handed her over to an elderly man who had previously been a master in the employ. She was chartered by Messrs. Vogemann, of Hamburg, for two voyages across the Atlantic, going in ballast to Savannah and returning with cargo for Hamburg. My owners had just formed a company for marketing West Australian timber, and had bought forty-two acres of ground at Purfleet in Essex to use as a depot known as Purfleet Wharf and Saw Mills, Ltd. On hearing this I immediately made application for a position on shore, and was shortly afterwards offered the position of superintendent of the pier, which was then being constructed. It was a small position, but as a daughter had been born to me I longed to give up the sea and remain on shore with my wife and child. I wrote to my late chief engineer informing him that I should not return to my ship. His wife had gone over to him at Hamburg, and when she heard the news she urged him also to give it up, to which he replied that he would do so at the end of that voyage. The ship sailed

again for Savannah from Hamburg, and when loaded out there proceeded down the river, and found that the meteorological signals were up signifying that a hurricane was approaching. The captain decided to anchor and await developments, but as the weather did not appear to grow any worse, after a few hours he sailed. Unfortunately this was an error of judgment. He must have sailed right into the centre of the hurricane, for I regret to say the ship was never heard of again.

A merciful escape for me! Even after twenty-five years I still grieve for Hume. He had been my friend and colleague for four years, and if he had only listened to his wife and given up the sea at the time she asked him to he would now doubtless be alive, and most assuredly still my very faithful friend.

I soon made good in my position on shore, being rapidly advanced to manager, and was after a few years responsible for converting the depot into a very extensive general wharfinger business. The business was sold as a going concern in 1919 to a firm who stipulated that I should enter their service. I agreed, with the result that they immediately appointed me managing director, and life with me now flows along on easy lines. But in the evening, when I get home and am comfortably seated in my arm-chair, my thoughts are ever on the old days at sea and the men I used to know—such days and such men as will never be seen again.

It is good to have lived in those old days, and, as I am in the habit of saying, I am in the unique position of having lived two lives—one of twenty-one years at sea, and another of, up to the present, twenty-five on shore. The life on shore has been full of many happy and unhappy experiences, but they are always forgotten in thinking of the care-

free days, so good to look back on, despite the discomforts we experienced, of my life as an apprentice and junior officer, which began forty-four years ago.

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